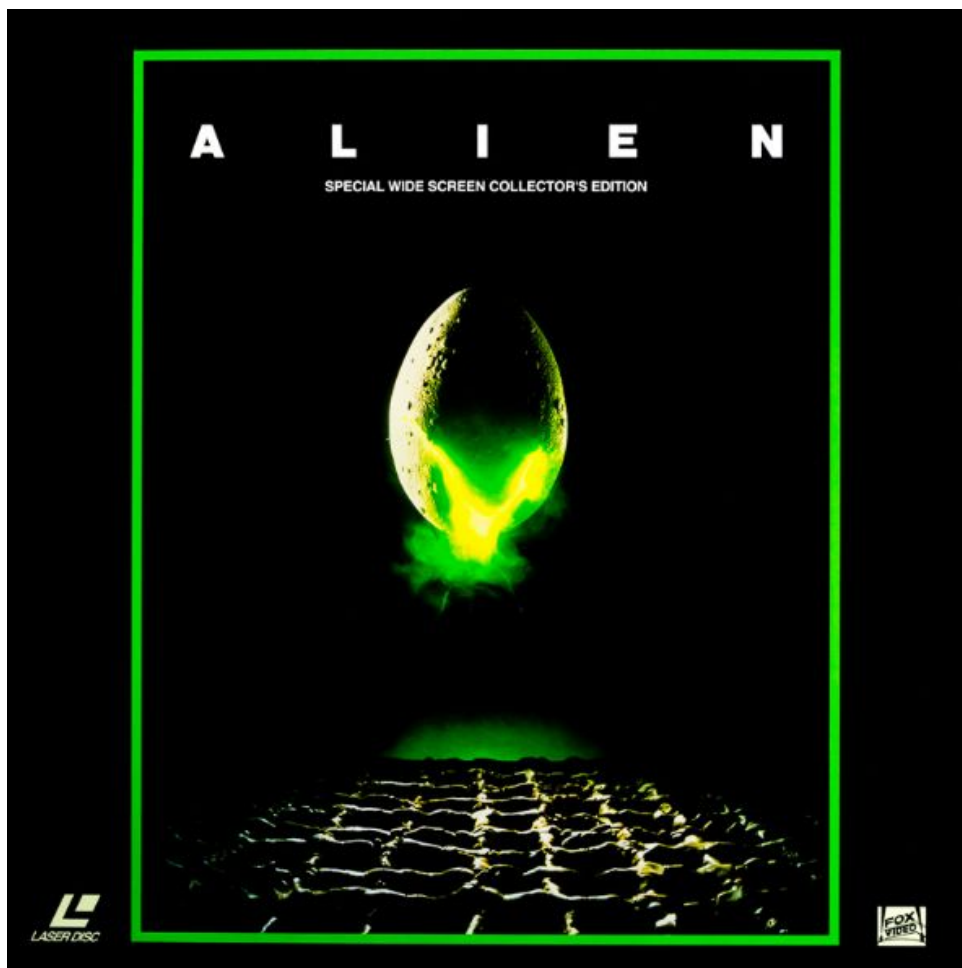


Alien: Special Collector's Edition LaserDisc Collector's Section

By Michael Matessino and David C. Fein

Transcribed By Preston Medeiros



PREFACE

ALIEN is my all time favorite film. From the first time that I saw the film on VHS to the many countless viewings on Cable TV and in various home media formats, it has remained my all time favorite movie. While I could go on endlessly on all the reasons for why I love ALIEN, there are two primary reasons why I have adored this film for so many years. The first, is the immense creative force that was generated by a collaboration of some of the greatest artists ever assembled in the history of filmmaking. The second, is the purely visceral cinematic experience and simmering pace that I've grown to appreciate over the years.

The making of ALIEN, for me, has always been just as fascinating as the film itself. And while there are numerous high quality “making of” documentary films, nothing seems to compare to the vast information that was researched and presented in the collector’s section of the ALIEN: SPECIAL COLLECTOR’S EDITION LASERDISC released on October 8, 1992. Access to this wonderful information has been made available in subsequent DVD and Blu-ray releases. However, reading this vast information in the LaserDisc format on your TV screen is not the most comfortable experience. Thus was born this project to transcribe the information into an easier to read format. This has been a labor of love for me and I hope you will enjoy reading it and taking a journey to discover and cherish all the creative

components that came together to form ALIEN. Please note that only the text from the collector's section of the LaserDisc has been transcribed. All photos come from my personal archive collection and memorabilia of ALIEN. Also note that Chapter 20: Home Video was not included in the LaserDisc material.

-Preston R. Medeiros, February 14, 2020

COLLECTOR'S SECTION

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the ALIEN Collector's Section. This exclusive Fox Video presentation represents the end result of an extensive period of research, during which many artists associated with the film graciously contributed their time and effort as well as items from their private collections. Designed exclusively for the laserdisc collector, this compilation of materials and information has been arranged into an exhaustive documentary of the creation, development, and production of ALIEN. Whether a serious archivist or casual viewer, this section will enrich further viewings of the film.

PART 1: PRE-PRODUCTION

Chapter 2

THE SCREENPLAY

A motion picture begins with the written word, a blueprint called a script or screenplay. Not unlike the creature in *ALIEN*, an idea for a movie hatches and grows, beginning in the mind, graduating to paper, existing in many physical forms before achieving its final state: a completed film on a theater screen.

ALIEN was originally conceived by DAN O'BANNON, a talented filmmaker who had co-written the science fiction satire *DARK STAR* (1974) with John Carpenter. He had also produced the visual effects for the film and starred in it as well. After *DARK STAR*,

O'Bannon worked on the computer animation and graphic effects for STAR WARS (1977), before travelling to Europe to begin pre-production work on the film version of Frank Herbert's Dune, for which he was to supervise the visual effects. At the time, the best-selling 1965 novel was under option by producer Alexandro Jodorowsky (EL TOPO, 1971).



Dan O'Bannon

O'Bannon arrived in France to meet with Jodorowsky and the three fantasy artists who were going to design the film. They were surrealist painter H.R. GIGER of Switzerland, Heavy Metal artist JEAN "MOEBIUS" GIRAUD of France, and CHRIS FOSS of England,

famous for his science fiction book cover artwork. Despite this pool of extraordinary talent, the project's financial obstacles could not be overcome. Uncertain of what his next project would be, O'Bannon returned to the United States.

Dune was later picked up by Dino DeLaurentiis and subsequently produced without the artistic contributions of Giger, Giraud, or Foss. O'Bannon was not involved with the resulting 1984 film.

The filmmaker retreated to the home of his friend RONALD SHUSSETT in Los Angeles when DUNE was cancelled. Soon he wanted to write again and decided to resurrect a screenplay he had begun in 1972 called Memory. Set in the year 2087, it was much like DARK STAR in concept, but serious in tone. Its

structure provided the backbone of the first half of what would eventually become ALIEN, with a crew of astronauts discovering a dormant creature on an alien planet. When O'Bannon became unsure where to take the story, Shussett reminded his colleague of another of his uncompleted stories, one involving gremlins that wreak havoc aboard a B-17 bomber during a World War II night raid, suggesting this premise for the second half of the narrative, with the alien creature hiding out aboard the spaceship. O'Bannon worked on the new storyline, at first calling it Star Beast, but soon he settled on ALIEN as the perfect title.



Dan O'Bannon and Ronald Shusett

When the first script for ALIEN was completed after three months of writing, O'Bannon contracted RON COBB, a famous American eco-political cartoonist and talented designer and painter, to do some preliminary

sketches for O'Bannon to use when pitching the script to producers.

O'Bannon intended to direct ALIEN himself as a low-budget project. He and Shussett began circulating the script, receiving many favorable responses, but the most promising came from BRANDYWINE PRODUCTIONS, a new independent company headed by producer GORDON CARROLL and writer/directors DAVID GILER and WALTER HILL. The trio had read through three-hundred scripts and all agreed that ALIEN should be their first production.

In October of 1976, Brandywine bought a six-month option on the script, during which time Walter Hill began a rewrite on it. Hill was interested in directing the film and felt that it was worthy of substantial financing by a major

distributor. Brandywine, whose office was on the 20th Century Fox lot, had a first-refusal contract with the studio, which gave Fox the first option on any Brandywine property. Hill's draft of the ALIEN script caused Fox to express definite interest and in March of 1977 the studio put up \$10 Million in development money. Chris Foss was brought in from England to join Ron Cobb and Dan O'Bannon on designing the film, while Hill and Giler continued reworking the script with O'Bannon. Finally, on October 31, 1977, at the height of Fox's STAR WARS blitz, the studio committed to make the picture.

Giler and Hill continued their rewrites, which ultimately led to a controversy over screen credit for the script. This resulted from a request to the Writers Guild of America that Giler and Hill be given credit for the screenplay with O'Bannon

receiving “story” credit only. Despite the Guild’s arbitration that O’Bannon receive sole credit for the script, the fact remains that all three writers are responsible for ALIEN. While it is true that O’Bannon’s original script contains none of the characters portrayed in the film, the sequence of events is virtually identical. In addition to most of the characterization, many key elements of the finished script were conceived by Hill and Giler, but O’Bannon’s original premise and dramatic structure remain intact in the completed film.

Dan O’Bannon’s original screenplay contains a number of elements that were eventually discarded or altered in later drafts. However, Ron Cobb and Chris Foss had executed drawings, paintings, and storyboards for many of these sequences. A look at this art work in conjunction with excerpts from Dan

O'Bannon's screenplay provides a tantalizing peak at the screenwriter's original vision of ALIEN.

In O'Bannon's original script, there are only six astronauts, all men: Standard, Roby, Melkonis, Broussard, Hunter, and Faust. Their ship, with low-budget intentions in mind, is a small vessel called the Snark. Awakened from hypersleep by the ship's talking computer, they set down on a small asteroid to investigate a strange transmission of unknown origin.

The crew sends out a search party of three people. Unlike the final version, in this first script the astronauts need breathing masks only and not full pressure suits.

As in the film, the search party discovers a derelict spacecraft. Before Giger was asked to

design it, many different concepts by Cobb, Foss, and Moebius were considered.

The interior of the derelict in O'Bannon's script is a cavernous chamber containing an array of dead machinery.

As in the completed film, O'Bannon's script depicts the astronauts finding the dead alien seated in a chair aboard the derelict ship. The console in front of him is identified as the source of the strange transmission. Near the dead alien, the astronauts find an empty alien egg.

In the O'Bannon script, the egg chamber is not found in the derelict. However, the astronauts examine the dead alien and find that he has scratched the image of a triangle on the panel in front of him. It is only after returning to the Snark that the crew discovers its meaning.

In O'Bannon's script, the crew spends a lot of time speculating and analyzing. Some interesting ideas about the origin and nature of the creature are brought out, but ultimately, David Giler and Waller Hill eliminated most of this type of dialogue in favor of keeping the Alien and the derelict a total mystery.

O'Bannon's script sends the astronauts out of the ship a second time to investigate the pyramid. They carry devices called "datasticks," which serve as both scanning instruments and portable cameras.

The astronauts reach the pyramid and find no entrance at its base, so Broussard scales one of the walls and climbs to the top, finding an entrance there. He then lowers himself down a dark narrow tunnel while Standard and Melkonis wait below. After the facehugger attaches itself

to Broussard's face, Melkonis and Standard climb the pyramid and haul Broussard back up.

Seeing the parasite on his face, Melkonis and Standard bring Broussard back to the ship, place him in the infirmary, and then begin speculating with the rest of the crew about their discoveries.

Eventually, the crew decides to examine the hieroglyphics from the pyramid in the hope of gaining insight into the creature's life cycle.

Walter Hill and David Giler were responsible for the creation of the seven characters portrayed in the film: Dallas, Kane, Ripley, Ash, Lambert, Parker, and Brett. The first rewrite changed the name of the ship from the Snark to the Leviathan, and altered the encounter on the planet.

Walter Hill at first expanded O'Bannon's pyramid concept to that of an entire city, but ultimately it was dropped completely in favor of concentrating on the derelict spacecraft. The dead alien in the chair was at first eliminated, but finally reinstated when it was agreed that showing the end result of the Alien infestation was necessary. In order to streamline the plot by having only one expedition on the planet, both the alien corpse and the egg chamber were placed aboard the derelict.

The rewrites followed O'Bannon's story sequence closely, enriching the characterization and the mystery surrounding the Alien. The anonymity of O'Bannon's characters was replaced by the concept of "space-going truck drivers." A realistic bitterness among the crew began to develop, creating additional dramatic

tension. Additionally, two of the characters became female.

The most significant contribution by Hill and Giler was the character of Ash, the android, which came out of Hill's desire to supply activity for the characters when they weren't trying to fight the Alien. In O'Bannon's first draft, the ship's computer talked, but served no real dramatic purpose. In Hill's first rewrite the computer continued to talk, but it was now becoming the basis for the sub-plot concerning the protection of the alien organism by the "Company." In its first stage of development, this sub-plot suggests that the ship's computer sees the biological threat of the Alien as a chance to witness an evolutionary experiment. It therefore refuses to assist either side and simply awaits for the outcome of the confrontation.

Hill and Giler eventually concluded that this approach was too derivative of the HAL-9000 computer in Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY (1968). Their solution was to transfer this material to Ash, the android science officer, making the entire mission to retrieve the Alien a cover-up by the "Company."

Before the sub-plot was developed as it is seen in the film, later versions included several scenes involving Ash that were dropped from the final shooting script. All drafts following Walter Hill's first rewrite were executed after Ridley Scott was set as director. Dan O'Bannon made revisions to all of the rewrites until the final script was realized, but many of these changes were based on Ridley Scott's ideas and recommendations.

In the Hill/Giler drafts, the conversation following Dallas' death was immediately followed by a lengthy action sequence which led directly into Ripley's discovery of Ash's Special Order.

Parker, on the way to refuel the weapons, sees the Alien standing near the main airlock. Seeing this as an opportunity to flush the creature off the ship, he quietly signals Ripley on the bridge to open the inner hatch. She complies, and the Alien enters the airlock. Suddenly, an alarm klaxon sounds, startling the creature. The hatch closes on a part of the Alien, causing acid to bleed through the deck inside the airlock. The creature wrenches itself free and escapes back into the air shaft. Ripley arrives to assist Parker. The airlock chamber is secured. Lambert and Ash soon arrive.

As the sequence concludes, Ripley's

suspensions about Ash are further aroused, the master computer key sub-plot is resolved, and the event leads directly into Ripley's discovery of the conspiracy. In the finished film, the computer key subplot is eliminated. Therefore, Dallas' death automatically gives Ripley access to "Mother," resulting in her immediate discovery of Ash's Special Order. The revelation of Ash as an android then follows.

The discovery of Ash's identity provides an excellent opportunity to analyze how a story element develops from its inception to the completed film. A look at the various drafts of the ALIEN screenplay demonstrates how the conspiracy subplot gradually became more focused and streamlined.

Chapter 3

THE DIRECTOR

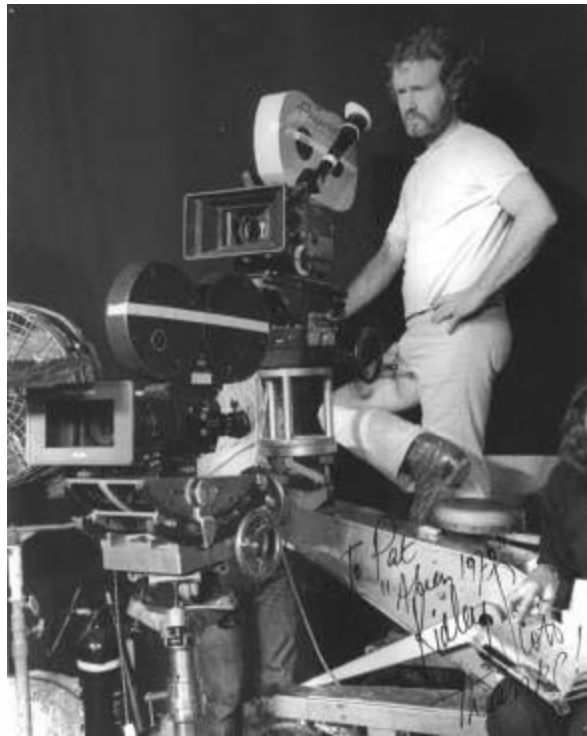
By the time Walter Hill completed his first rewrite of the script, *ALIEN* was scheduled as a major 20th Century Fox release. Hill was set to direct the film, but he eventually found the project in conflict with his schedule to direct *THE WARRIORS* (1979). Searching for a suitable director, David Giler recalled seeing *THE DUELLISTS* (1977) and being impressed by the work of *RIDLEY SCOTT*, so the director was contacted. *THE DUELLISTS*, an adaptation of the Joseph Conrad story *The Duel*, was Scott's first feature, but he had directed thousands of

successful and acclaimed television commercials in England. He also had a strong background in art direction and cinematography, having studied at the Royal College of Art where he made an impressive 16mm short film called BOY ON A BICYCLE.

After three years in dramatic television he formed Ridley Scott Associates and began producing and directing commercials, which trained him in the art of creating hypnotically effective images economically. His talents gave ALIEN a visual axis that turned the everchanging script into a purely cinematic experience with his unmistakable stamp.

Following ALIEN, Ridley Scott went on to direct BLADE RUNNER (1982), LEGEND (1985), SOMEONE TO WATCH OVER ME (1987), BLACK RAIN (1989), THELMA &

LOUISE (1991), and 1492(1992). The controversial THELMA & LOUISE earned Scott his first Academy Award ® nomination. (Best Director-1991).



Ridley Scott

After Ridley Scott read the ALIEN script, he met with Gordon Carroll, David Giler, and Walter Hill. Casting and other preparations began, but

Scott knew that before the project could gather real momentum, a convincing alien creature had to be designed. He looked at the work of Cobb and Foss, and thought that their concepts for the Earth ship and its hardware were good, but he knew that the creature was the immediate priority and would require a totally unique concept.

Dan O'Bannon had originally wanted the Alien to be designed by H.R. Giger, the Swiss surrealist painter who had contributed to the unrealized DUNE project. As a low budget film, contracting H.R. Giger was an impractical expense, but now that ALIEN was a major studio project, O'Bannon was able to make another bid for Giger's involvement by giving a copy of Necronomicon to Ridley Scott. Scott immediately agreed with O'Bannon that Giger

should design the creature. Intrigued by a particular painting in the book called "Necronom IV," Scott wanted the creature it depicted to be the basis for the Alien.

Chapter 4

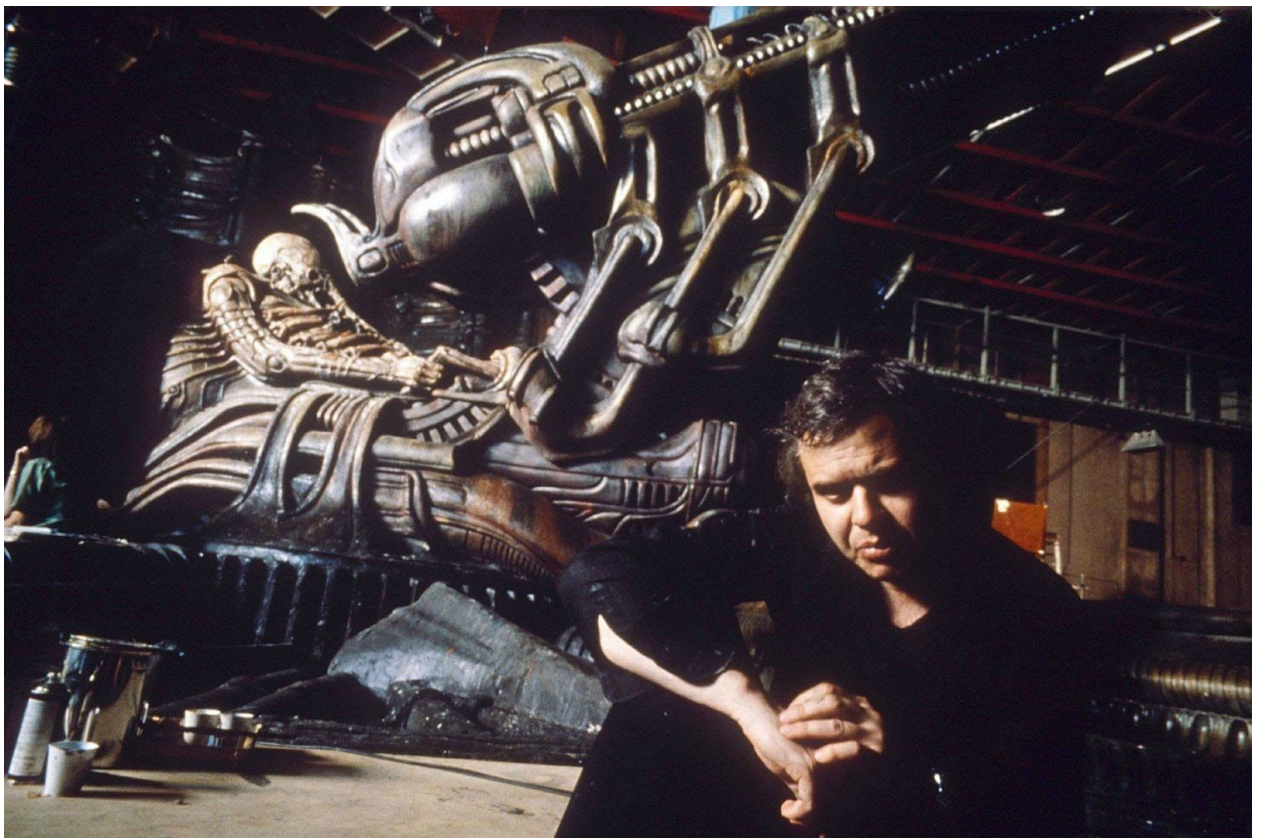
H.R. GIGER

Hans Rudi Giger, the Swiss surrealist painter, was born in Chur, Switzerland on February 5, 1940. Formally educated in architectural and industrial design at the College of Arts and Crafts in Zurich, he chose to utilize his talents in the creation of a personal visual world the artist calls biomechanical. The results of his unique style are usually surrealistic images formed by combining familiar organic and technological forms. Best known for his monochromatic airbrush renderings, Giger's work often evokes both an archetypal past and a technocratic future, the good and the evil, the

real and the dream-like, sometimes indicating beings and shapes that suggest human sexuality. His chief influences are H.P. Lovecraft, Edgar Allen Poe, and many others, but mostly his inspiration comes from his imagination and his dreams. Director Ridley Scott used Giger's book as a constant artistic guide on ALIEN, knowing that a man of Giger's talent was needed to create a convincing monster.

In July of 1977, before Fox had committed to the project, O'Bannon had contacted Giger himself, believing that the artist's designs would encourage potential buyers of the script. He had sent Giger an outline of the story at its present state of revision and a list of what had to be created.

After Ridley Scott decided that Giger should design the creature, O'Bannon showed him the original sketches and paintings Giger had sent him in response to his letter.



H.R. Giger in front of the Space Jockey

The “egg silo,” Giger’s version of the original O’Bannon pyramid, was intriguing to Ridley Scott, but it was already becoming apparent that the entire concept would be too costly to produce.

Giger’s designs for the egg cross-section were generally approved and would be modified only slightly.

Giger designs creatures with their physical function in mind. Knowing that O’Bannon’s script called for the parasite to leap out of the egg with violent force, he endowed it with a long coiled tail which would serve as a spring. However, the consensus on the overall design was that it was too large. It would later be redesigned more appropriately.

Giger’s designs for the chest burster and the adult Alien were done later. His initial

chestburster concept was different than the creature seen in the film, but this was the only design for it that was executed.

For the adult Alien, Ridley Scott remained convinced that Giger's "Necronom IV" painting was the perfect concept. Giger's early designs were all variations on the "Necronom" painting, and Ridley Scott continued to be impressed.

Chapter 5

THE ALIEN PRODUCTION UNIT

The pre-production period on ALIEN lasted only four months. Everyone completed their tasks on schedule, much to the credit of all the artists and technicians involved, and to the guiding hand of Ridley Scott. A group of talented professionals joined the director to complete the line-up of key production personnel.

On the line-production level, Carroll, Giler, and Hill were joined by co-storywriter Ronald Shussett as executive producer and by

O'Bannon's associate MARK HAGGARD as production executive. Additionally, IVOR POWELL, who had worked as associate producer for Ridley Scott Associates as well as on THE DUELLISTS, also joined the ALIEN team in the same capacity.

At Powell's suggestion, MICHAEL SEYMOUR was selected as the Production Designer. Seymour's job was to make sense out of the voluminous conceptual work that had been done for the film, quickly settle on final designs, and see that everything was constructed on time.

Set construction began at Shepperton Studios under the supervision of Construction Manager BILL WELCH. ROGER CHRISTIAN and LESLIE DILLEY, both of whom had worked on STAR WARS, were the art directors for

ALIEN, with IAN WHITTAKER as Set Decorator. Working to Seymour's specifications, their contributions brought the sets to life.

Scott worked meticulously on his storyboards throughout all this, detailing precisely how each scene should look. His vision of the entire film was the guiding force behind everyone's work.

By now he had changed the name of the vessel from Leviathan to Nostromo, named after the Joseph Conrad novel, and it was decided that the ship should be a large commercial vehicle towing an even larger refinery complex.

Working closely with Ron Cobb and Visual Design Consultant Dan O'Bannon, Seymour finalized the look of the ship, both outside and inside.

Michael Seymour was also coordinating the work of H.R. Giger, assisting the artist in realizing the designs for the alien landscape, derelict spacecraft, and adult Alien. The smaller alien forms were built by model maker ROGER DICKEN from Giger's designs. Later in the pre-production, CARLO RAMBALDI joined the project to design the elaborate "head effects" for the Alien. Rambaldi had won an Oscar for his work on the Dino DeLaurentiis' remake of KING KONG (1976) and had worked on bringing the benevolent aliens to life in Steven Spielberg's CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND (1977). He reunited with Spielberg to create the title character in E.T. THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL (1982) as well as the creatures for the DeLaurentiis production of DUNE (1984).

DEREK VANLINT, another colleague of Scott's from his commercial days, became the Director of Photography. He worked very closely with Michael Seymour in designing the sets with the photography and lighting in mind. Discussions of lighting schemes and how to photograph the creature continued right up until the starting date. During production, Vanlint and Scott served as Camera Operators themselves.

BRIAN JOHNSON was contracted as Visual Effects Supervisor, working simultaneously on ALIEN and THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK (1980). He began building the Nostromo and the various other miniatures with his associate NICK ALLDER. Alder also had to construct several working props, such as flamethrowers and medical tools.

Chapter 6

CASTING

Hill, Giler, and Scott were involved in casting the film as all the design and construction work was being done in England. MARY SELWAY and MARY GOLDBERG were the Casting Directors. The final selections resulted in an interesting ensemble of talented actors, many of them recognizable character players.

JOHN HURT

Before ALIEN, John Hurt had an impressive body of work in the English theater and had appeared in many films since the early sixties including THE WILD AND THE WILLING (1962), A MAN FOR ALL SEASONS (1966) and MIDNIGHT EXPRESS (1978), for which he received an Academy Award® nomination (Best Supporting Actor-1978). Following ALIEN, he was acclaimed for his portrayal of the title character in THE ELEPHANT MAN (1980) and continued to appear in films including HEAVEN'S GATE (1980), PARTNERS (1982), and CHAMPIONS (1983). In 1987, he gave a cameo appearance in Mel Brooks' SPACEBALLS, in which he spoofed his role in ALIEN.

IAN HOLM

Ian Holm studied at the Royal College of Dramatic Arts and is one of England's most reputable Shakespearean actors. Prior to ALIEN, Holm had appeared in many films including NICHOLAS AND ALEXANDRA (1971), THE MAN IN THE IRON MASK (1977), and the miniseries JESUS OF NAZARETH (1977). He has continued in both film and stage work, and was featured! in the films TIME BANDITS (1980), CHARIOTS OF FIRE (1981), WETHERBY (1985), and ANOTHER WOMAN (1988). He has also appeared in two recent cinematic remakes of Shakespearean plays, Kenneth Branagh's HENRY V (1989), and Franco Zeffirelli's HAMLET (1990).

Of all the actors in ALIEN, Ian had the distinction of requiring an android replica of himself. For the scene in which Ash's identity is discovered, a mold of Ian Holm's head was made and built onto a specially constructed torso section. The result was an extremely lifelike replica which was used for the "decapitation" shots and for the scenes of the fragmented science officer on the table.

During Ripley's final conversation with Ash, Ian Holm propped his head up through a hole in the table, while other shots employed the artificial head.

VERONICA CARTWRIGHT

Like John Hurt and Ian Holm, Veronica Cartwright is British by birth. The older sister of

Angela Cartwright (MAKE ROOM FOR DADDY, LOST IN SPACE, THE SOUND OF MUSIC, 1965), Veronica began performing in commercials at age six, making her film debut at nine in 1958's IN LOVE AND WAR. She and sister Angela appeared together in an episode of ALFRED HITCHCOCK PRESENTS, which led Veronica to the role of the terrified sister of Rod Taylor in THE BIRDS (1963). Although she has appeared in many types of films, she has become a recognizable face to science fiction and horror fans, having appeared in INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS (1978), THE RIGHT STUFF (1983), NIGHTMARES (1983), THE FLIGHT OF THE NAVIGATOR (1986), and THE WITCHES OF EASTWICK (1987).

TOM SKERRITT

A native of Detroit, Tom Skerritt made his motion picture debut in THE WAR HUNT (1962) and has steadily appeared in a wide variety of roles in films such as M*A*S*H (1970), THE TURNING POINT (1977), ICE CASTLES (1979), THE DEAD ZONE (1983), TOP GUN (1986), SPACECAMP (1986), POLTERGEIST III (1988) and STEEL MAGNOLIAS (1989). He was reunited with Veronica Cartwright for the film WISDOM (1986).

HARRY DEAN STANTON

Harry Dean Stanton began working in motion pictures as “Dean Stanton” with THE PROUD REBEL (1958). Since then he has

become one of the busiest character actors in the film industry. He has played a wide range of roles in films such as COOL HAND LUKE (1967), THE MISSOURI BREAKS (1976), PRIVATE BENJAMIN (1980), ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK (1981), CHRISTINE (1983), REPO MAN (1984), PARIS, TEXAS (1984), UFORIA (1980), ONE MAGIC CHRISTMAS (1985), THE LAST TEMPTATION OF CHRIST (1988), and WILD AT HEART (1990). Stanton was reunited with co-star Veronica Cartwright in the Jack Nicholson film MAN TROUBLE (1992).

YAPHET KOTTO

Yaphet Kotto has accumulated an impressive resume of stage and television work. His motion picture appearances include THE

THOMAS CROWN AFFAIR (1968), FIVE CARD STUD (1968), LIVE AND LET DIE (1973), BRUBAKER (1980), THE STAR CHAMBER (1983), WARNING SIGN (1985), MIDNIGHT RUN (1988), and THE RUNNING MAN (1987).

SIGOURNEY WEAVER

For the critical role of Ripley, the no-nonsense Warrant Officer who would be the sole survivor of the Nostromo crew, the producers selected an unknown actress named Sigourney Weaver. Born Susan Weaver, the actress chose her unique name at age fourteen from a reference in the novel *The Great Gatsby*. Sigourney's father is Sylvester "Pat" Weaver, who for five years ran the NBC Network, where he created the *Tonight* and *Today* shows, while

her mother is Elizabeth Inglis, a British actress who worked with directors William Wyler and Alfred Hitchcock before retiring



Sigourney Weaver

to raise her daughter as a New York social flower. Sigourney attended Stanford and Yale, where she studied drama, soon returning to New York where a variety of comedic stage roles earned her favorable critical notices. A few television roles followed, which led to her first fleeting appearance in feature films as Woody Allen's date in ANNIE HALL (1977). Sigourney next appeared in the Israeli-produced film MADMAN (1978).

When Weaver was first asked to test for ALIEN, the actress was reluctant to do a science fiction film, but she felt that Ripley was a different and unique role, so she went to England where Ridley Scott and the producers filmed screen tests that impressed the executives at Fox. Weaver received critical acclaim for her performance and the success of

the film skyrocketed Weaver to stardom. She soon became a popular leading actress, developing a string of acclaimed dramatic and comedic performances in films such as EYEWITNESS (1981), THE YEAR OF LIVING DANGEROUSLY (1983), DEAL OF THE CENTURY (1983), GHOSTBUSTERS (1984), and HALF MOON STREET (1986). She reprised her role as Ripley in ALIENS (1986), for which she received her first Academy Award® nomination (Best Actress-1986). Two more nominations followed with GORILLAS IN THE MIST (Best Actress-1988) and WORKING GIRL (Best Supporting Actress-1988). She then reprised her role of “Dana Barrett” in GHOSTBUSTERS II (1990) before playing Ripley a third time in ALIEN 3 (1992). Following

ALIEN 3, she again worked with Ridley Scott, portraying Queen Isabella in 1492.

With the casting finished, set construction nearing completion, and a crew of three hundred waiting at Shepperton Studios, principal photography on ALIEN was ready to begin on July 5, 1978.

PART II: PRODUCTION

Chapter 7

PRODUCTION INTRO & NOSTROMO

This Production Section documents the individual creative elements seen in ALIEN. Each category is discussed in the order in which it appears in the film. This will enrich further viewings of the film as well as thoroughly archive the production. Principal photography for ALIEN began on July 5, 1978 at the Shepperton Studio Centre in England.

NOSTROMO EXTERIOR

The spaceship Nostromo, as it appears in the film, is the end result of countless sketches

and paintings. Dan O'Bannon's first draft of the script calls the ship the Snark, which was later changed to Leviathan. Early in the production, artists Chris Foss and Ron Cobb were brought in to design the ship. Originally envisioned as a much smaller craft, the early spaceship concepts tended to vary in size and complexity as seen in the paintings and sketches by Chris Foss and Ron Cobb.

After Ridley Scott joined the project, he asked Cobb and Foss to rethink their concepts for the spaceship. Scott wanted the vessel to be a space-going "tugboat" with a refinery section in tow. Several other variations resulted.

Scott looked at the new paintings and applied his production design and drafting experience toward his own concepts for the

ship, working with Ron Cobb on finalizing the Nostromo design used in the film.

In actuality, the Nostromo was envisioned as eight hundred feet long, with the refinery measuring a mile and a half across. Ridley Scott was definite about wanting to use a series of castle-like towers as the refinery, and his designs along with Ron Cobb's were then handed over to Effects Supervisor Brian Johnson for model construction.

Johnson and his associate Nick Alder had very little time to decide how big the model should be. While principal photography began at Shepperton Studios, model construction commenced at the nearby Bray Studios. It was finally decided that three different Nostromo models would be constructed. For all three models, the basic outline was constructed of

wood and plastic. Using Ron Cobb's designs for the ship's interior, the effects team conformed the exterior of the model by adding hatches, windows, and other details. Following an economic practice used with great success on STAR WARS, pieces of existing model kits were incorporated into the Nostromo from battleships, tanks, and World War II bombers. Ridley Scott was involved in the model construction as much as possible, making his own recommendations for detail and color.

The first of the three Nostromo models was one foot long and was attached to the huge model of the refinery. This was used for shots of the ship lumbering through space with the cargo in tow. With the refinery attached, this model was eighteen feet long and weighed eight hundred pounds.

When photographed, this model was surrounded by a huge black cyclorama. Through the use of a special grid system, the effects photographers used double exposures to control the light falling on the model. Many lights were used but were manipulated to look as though only a single light source --- the nearest star was shining on the vessel.

The second of the three Nostromo models was a four foot version of the ship itself, used when the vessel detaches from the refinery in order to land on the planet.

The third Nostromo model was fourteen feet in length and was used for the ship's landing and lift-off from the alien planet and for detailed close-ups in space such as those seen in the opening shots of the film.

The four foot and fourteen foot models were designed to display engine exhaust, as seen in the ship's descent to the planet, the landing, and the lift-off. This was achieved by using high intensity quartz lights and plumbing within the model through which jets of vapor were directed. Brian Johnson's original idea was to give the planet a gold sky and a rust colored landscape, but Ridley Scott felt that greys and blacks better conveyed the eeriness he wanted.

The largest Nostromo model was photographed descending onto a miniature landscape in a cloud of exhaust. The lift-off was photographed in the same manner.

To provide continuity between the miniatures of the Nostromo and the live-action footage, one portion of the ship's exterior was constructed in full scale. A forty foot landing leg

was built for the scenes showing the astronauts leaving and returning to the ship. The largest soundstage at Shepperton Studios was used for the set piece, which was surrounded by a non-descript landscape obscured by a raging dust-storm. Nick Alder was responsible for creating the dust-storm and the exhaust that seems to be generating from the landing gear.

As an additional enhancement to the scale of the landing gear, three children, including Ridley Scott's two sons, were substituted for the actors in the long shots of this scene. The final effect demonstrates the immense size of the craft providing an interesting contrast to the claustrophobic interiors.

Chapter 8

NOSTROMO INTERIOR

The interiors of the Nostromo reflect the talents of everyone involved in their creation. From Rod Cobb's designs, Ridley Scott, Dan O'Bannon, Michael Seymour, Derek Vanlint, Les Dilley, Roger Christian, Ian Whittaker, and Bill Welch worked together constantly to satisfy all the economic, photographic, and artistic requirements of the sets. Ron Cobb had been in England since January to apply his engineering knowledge to the construction process. Finalizing the blueprints was so time consuming that some of the sets were not completed when principal photography began. As a result, the shooting schedule was altered constantly to do work around the construction.

In designing the sets, Michael Seymour at first considered the fact that the Nostromo was a ship with three distinct levels, and thought of actually building a three-level set on one soundstage. While this would have been economic in one sense, it would have created far too many construction problems as well as difficulties in shooting. In the end, each of the three levels was built separately.

Seymour worked out a plan of the ship's geography, specifying where each room would be in relation to the other decks. His intricate design would allow each of the three levels to be constructed as a working maze of rooms and corridors that would permit the actors to walk from one area to the next exactly as if they were aboard the ship. All of the sets had ceilings as well, which enhanced their realism.

Ridley Scott's detailed storyboards enabled everyone to perform their tasks with the practical and creative needs of the film in mind. Seymour and Scott agreed that the sets should feel real and appear lived-in and weathered. Seymour applied grease and dirt to certain areas and installed steam ventilators to create the impression that the ship was actually working.

Photographically, many innovations had to be made due to the tight, low-ceilinged sets. Vanlint worked with Seymour to devise ways to light through grill work in the corridors, use hidden or in-shot lighting, and apply neon, fluorescent, and strobes where they would be effective.

The Nostromo needed three distinct lighting levels: minimum lighting for when the crew is in hypersleep, a working level of light for when the

crew is awake and about the ship, and emergency lighting for when the self-destruct system is activated. To accommodate these and other shooting needs, Seymour designed all the sets with walls that could be easily moved out of the way for certain camera angles and lighting setups.

Finally, the contributions of Ron Cobb, art directors Les Dilley and Roger Christian, and set decorator Ian Whittaker brought the Nostromo sets to life. In one way or another, Cobb was involved in the creation of every room aboard the ship. His original sketches and paintings of the various sets provided solid foundation that led to a series of sets that were both practical and realistic.

A LEVEL

On the A Level of the Nostromo, the astronauts sleep, eat, are doctored, and pilot the ship. The sets built for this level consist of the Hypersleep Chamber, the Bridge, the “Mother” Computer Annex, the Mess, the Autodoc, and the linking corridors.

HYPER_SLEEP CHAMBER

The introduction to the characters in *ALIEN* occurs in the Hypersleep Chamber, the circular room in which the astronauts lie in suspended animation for their journey home. Ron Cobb’s original concept was different, resembling a sleeping car on a train.

Les Dilley and Roger Christian designed the hypersleep chambers in the shape of a flower, with perspex covers that would open like petals.

THE SHIP'S MESS

In the ship's mess, or galley, the crew eats their meals and holds informal meetings. In the early part of the film, the mess is used for breakfast and then for the conference in which Dallas informs the crew of the transmission that has been intercepted by the ship's computer. The room is equipped with a large round table with comfortable seating. On one wall is a small commissary. Close inspection reveals a variety of capsuled food in powder form, crockery, and a sink.

“MOTHER” COMPUTER ANNEX

For the small room in which Dallas and Ripley interface with the Nostromo computer, referred to as “Mother,” Michael Seymour designed an octagonal room covered from ceiling to floor with tiny lights. Close inspection of the eye-level lights reveal that each one has a label beneath it describing its function. To create the feeling that the “life” of the ship is controlled from this one room, the sound editors added a rhythmic respiratory effect to all scenes taking place here.

BRIDGE

The Nostromo bridge was the most intricately detailed of all of the spaceship

interiors. As the nerve center of all ship operations, the final set exemplifies the fully collaborative design efforts of the entire film.

Ron Cobb had begun concepts for the bridge set very early in pre-production. His first offering came to be known as “California split-ranch style” for its spacious dual-level operating areas and panoramic bay window. It featured a large viewing screen and high-back chairs. This set would not only have been too expensive to construct, but the design was incongruous with Ridley Scott’s intentions that the bridge be claustrophobic and dense.

Ridley Scott insisted that the bridge be filled with a density of elements, resembling the cockpit of a bomber. Seymour Dilley and Christian constructed the set out of a variety of elements including pieces of old aircraft, cars,

radios, and televisions, endowing the bridge with an endless array of pipes, wires, and switches. All of this was painted a military green, and then labels were stenciled onto the various surfaces.

Banks of illuminated switches were also installed, all with lettering on them. Detail upon detail was added, much to the director's satisfaction. Scott also wanted the bridge to have overhead consoles to make the set even more tight and claustrophobic. When completed, the ceiling at the front of the bridge was only six and a half feet high, forcing the very tall Gordon Carroll to duck when in this area of the set.

Brian Johnson breathed life into the bridge set by installing a series of forty working television monitors of various sizes on which computer readouts, technical and navigational information, maps, and views of space would be

displayed. He designed an intricate video control center to send the different information to the monitors. Johnson also wired the panels on the bridge so that the performers could activate the bridge controls themselves.

Details were added right up until the first day of shooting on the set.

AUTODOC

The ships' infirmary, called the "autodoc" since Dan O'Bannon's original screenplay, was also an elaborate set. It was completely designed by Ron Cobb, and was the first set to be built to his precise specifications.

Ron Cobb's first painting of the autodoc was different from his later design, but the retractable operating table was among the concepts used in

the final version. His later design incorporated the semicircular shape of the room as well as the key elements of the completed set.

The finished autodoc set featured a work station for Ash equipped with actual medical supplies purchased for the production and several television monitors.

B LEVEL

The B Level of the Nostromo consists of the main engine room, manned by Parker and Brett, areas for general maintenance, and service corridors. Its appearance, particularly in its lighting, is vastly different from Level A, appearing much darker and more weathered and dirty. This concept is enhanced by the sound design, which contrasts the quiet of the A

Level corridors to the noisy vibrations on B Level.

C LEVEL

The lower level of the Nostromo contains storage compartments, a garage full of vehicles, a network of machinery-filled corridors, Ash's special console blister, and the large chambers housing the ship's landing gear. Seen only briefly in the film, C Level is the darkest, most weather-beaten, and eeriest part of the ship.

CONTROL BLISTER

During the expedition on the planet, Ash moves to a special console in a "control blister" from which he monitors the progress of the

search party. A bubble-shaped window provides the science officer with a view of the landing gear and the planet's surface. Constructed to overlook the landing leg set, this console area was designed by Cobb and featured a remote control which moved Ash's chair forward, backward, left, and right. Ian Holm was able to operate the chair himself, although a fail-safe cut-off switch was also installed in the event of a malfunction.

THE SHUTTLE NARCISSUS

Another part of the Nostromo that was designed by Ron Cobb is the emergency shuttle Narcissus, in which Ripley escapes from the doomed spaceship. Since this was an element in the script from Dan O'Bannon's original

version, Ron Cobb began design concepts very early. The shuttle is boarded via a sophisticated turntable system and the craft contains two Hypersleep Chambers.

The interior of the shuttle was constructed by rearranging components of the bridge set and redressing them. The resulting set appears completely different from the bridge.

Chapter 9

COSTUME DESIGN

JOHN MOLLO, an Academy Award winner for STAR WARS (Best Costume Design, 1977), designed the costumes for the Nostromo crew. The jumpsuits are informal and comfortable with a lived-in look that indicates the nature of the work the crew does aboard the ship.

Concept artist Jean “Moebius” Giraud also worked briefly on costume concepts. Michael Seymour felt that Moebius’ designs delightfully resembled Japanese medieval armor. Conveying this to John Mollo, the costume designer elaborated on this in constructing the suits, giving them a gothic look with a rich surface texture.

Although the suits were equipped to display a jet of steam to indicate respiration, the costumes were not actually fitted with any means for the actor to breathe. As a result, the performers, including Ridley Scott's children, began breathing in their own carbon dioxide and losing consciousness, making it necessary to remove the helmets immediately upon the completion of each take.

Chapter 10

THE PLANET

The alien world to which the *Nostromo* journeys is described as a planetoid 1200 kilometers in diameter with a gravity level equivalent to .86 of the Earth's gravity. Its freezing atmosphere is made up of xenite, nitrogen, carbon dioxide, and methane with a surface structure of rock on top of a lava base. Although not mentioned in the film, the name of the planet is "Acheron," later called LV-426 in the film's sequel *ALIENS* (1986). Many talented artists contributed to the creation of a believable alien planet.

In the context of the story, the first view of the alien planet is from space, seen in the distance as the *Nostromo* approaches it in

response to the strange signal. It appears to consist of a large ringed world surrounded by three smaller planetoids or satellite moons. The ringed planet also serves as a backdrop for the main title, but the transmission is actually emanating from one of the smaller worlds around it.

To create the planet as seen from space, Nick Alder avoided using paintings, the most common method of creating planets in space films. Feeling that paintings can never create a perfect spherical shape, Alder's team took a globe of the Earth and spray painted it white. Special transparencies were then developed and projected onto the white globe.

To create the transparencies a camera was mounted over a tank that contained a mixture of chemicals. Dyes were then added to the

chemicals, creating various swirling patterns that were photographed, made into transparencies, and projected onto the globe. The final effect conveys a realistic feeling of distance between the camera angle and the planet's surface.

The landscape of the planet was designed by H.R. Giger. His original design was more complex than the one seen in the film, so it was modified before construction. Giger's biomechanical concept creates the subtle impression that at one time the planet may have been the home of some technological civilization. At the same time the planetscape, with its twisted shapes resembling large skeletal structures, exemplifies the cold inhospitality of unexplored space.

In addition to the landing and lift off sequences, the alien landscape is seen in

miniature for several other shots inserted into the sequence in which the astronauts explore the planet.

The planet set was constructed full scale on Stage H at the Shepperton Studios. When Giger first arrived in London, he found that the planet set was being constructed incorrectly. He personally took over the project and began again. To construct a small prototype of the planet set, Giger requested a shipment of bones. An entire truckload was brought in, from which Giger made his prototype.

Using the bones, plasticine, cable, and small pieces of machinery, Giger and his team built the planet set. Each of the specific shapes that jutted from the planet's surface were made in the form of wooden frames. These frames were covered with wire netting and then coated with

jute and plaster of Paris. Finally, the structures were plowed over with a mason's trowel and then painted. While construction was underway, a scenic backdrop was being painted as well.

Chapter 11

DERELICT EXTERIOR

During the early days of the production, Chris Foss, Ron Cobb, and Jean “Moebius” Giraud designed many different concepts for the derelict spacecraft found on the planet by the astronauts.

Ridley Scott felt that none of these designs were as other-worldly as he wanted. He knew that the derelict should have no reference to anything of human creation. After Giger joined the project and was working on the creature, Scott asked him to design a derelict, believing that he was most qualified to create the type of craft that was needed. Giger designed the derelict early one morning when he couldn't



Alien Derelict

sleep, and his concept was met with approval by Scott and the producers.

The derelict seen in the film is a model that was built and photographed at Bray Studios. To achieve the final result, Giger first constructed a small prototype out of plasticine and then worked with sculptor PETER BOYSEY in building the large model.

The core of the derelict was made out of polystyrene, with a metal tube armature within it

for support. The polystyrene was covered with fiberglass netting and a thin layer of plasticine which protected the model from damage by bright studio lights. The detail on the model was made from various cables and technical accessories, giving the derelict it's final biomechanical look. The derelict was then painted and surrounded by a miniature version of Giger's landscape.

The derelict was photographed in subdued light and foreground smoke. To augment the scale for the long shots, three tiny puppets of the astronauts were used. These puppets, each an inch and a half high, were mounted on a motorized track and operated remotely. As well as moving slowly toward the derelict, they were able to rotate, altering the small lights in the

helmets and creating the impression of real movement.

Bill Welch, the head of the construction team, worked closely with Les Dilley on the derelict entrance, following Peter Boysey's model. The wall of the ship was built up from a wooden structure and the entrance was mounted separately. The bulges around the openings were carved out of styrofoam, while the detail on the wall was molded out of clay. The entire structure was then painted.

Chapter 12

DERELICT INTERIOR

Giger's designs for the derelict interior were based on his biomechanical concept. First seen in the gangway as the astronauts enter, and then in the cockpit and egg chamber, the derelict walls were constructed of lumber covered with lathe and webbing and then built up with pre-cast plaster forms. The wall detail contained repeating patterns, so molds could be made to apply sections at a time. Final layers of plaster were then added to the walls, often by Giger himself, and finally, the surface was painted to look dark and shiny.

The "space jockey" is the term given by the production team to the mysterious giant alien skeleton found inside the derelict by the

Nostromo crew. Shrouded in mystery, it remains one of the most intriguing concepts in the film. The presence of the dead alien can be found in O'Bannon's original screenplay, an early painting of which was executed by Ron Cobb.

In O'Bannon's draft, the triangle etched on the console in front of the creature leads the humans directly to the discovery of the pyramid. When the pyramid concept was dropped from the revised scripts, the alien skeleton was also dropped because the egg chamber had been amalgamated into the derelict. But Ridley Scott and the producers were in favor of showing an inhabitant of the derelict, so after much negotiation it was finally approved and designed.

Giger designed the space jockey, inspired by another painting from Necronomicon that Ridley Scott had liked. Following two touch

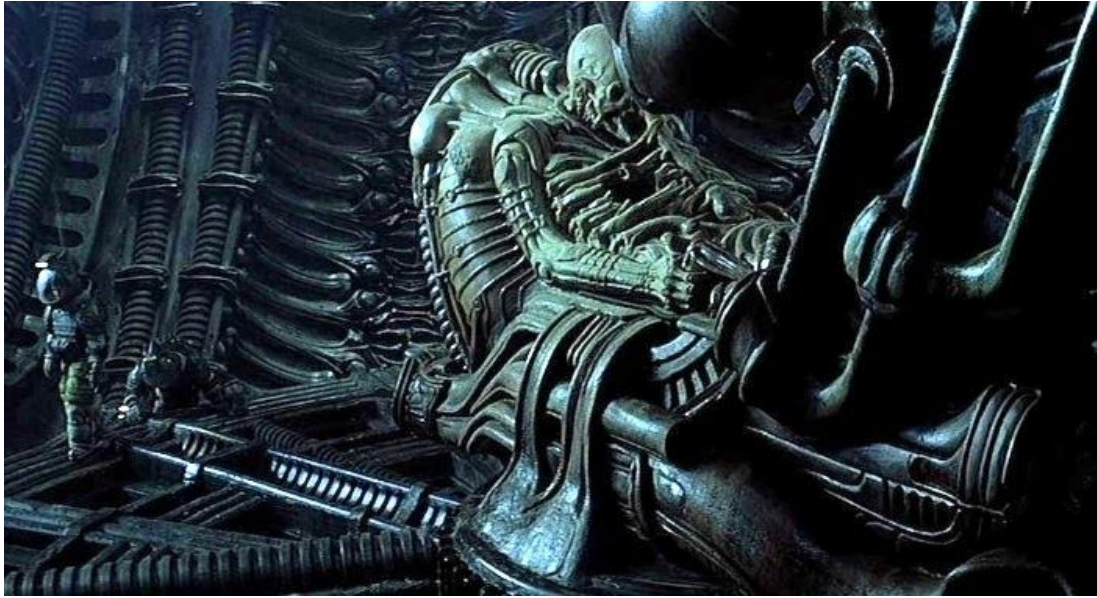
sketches by Scott, Giger executes two paintings of the creature. The first displays a view of the entire chamber in which it is discovered. The second was the basis for the construction of the actual set piece. Giger's designs met with unanimous approval.

The final result is a definitive inhabitant of Giger's biomechanical world because the creature appears to be physically attached to the chair he is sitting in, as if totally integrated into the task he was performing. It is clear that the creature was the victim of a chest burster, but nothing else about him is revealed. He is seated before a large mechanical device that could be a cannon, a scanner, a telescope, or a navigational console. While it is never clear what the huge device is, it was originally designed to be discovered as the source of the alien signal,

indicating that this dead alien was responsible for it's transmission.

As with the derelict entrance, Giger and Boysey first constructed a prototype for the space jockey in the form of a 1/25 scale plasticine model, which served as the basis for the full-scale construction.

At the core of the full-scale model was a frame of steel tubing for physical support. The basic outline was constructed in the form of a wooden framework, and then shaped in plaster of Paris and pieces of ribbed tubing, closely following Giger's painting. Boysey molded the pilot and the back of the chair out of clay, while the rest of the chair and the large instrument were carved out of styrofoam or made from plastic foam molds.



Space Jockey

While the space jockey was under construction, the rest of the set was being erected on Stage A. The cockpit is meant to be located directly beneath the circular dome on the top of the derelict, and because of this, Giger intended a circular set to be built around the space jockey. However, in an effort to economize, it was decided that the walls of the cockpit would not be constructed. Instead, the

same wall for the egg chamber would be used for the cockpit.

The round “turntable” on which the space jockey is found was built on wheels so that it could be rolled directly onto the egg chamber set. Five feet above the floor of the sound stage, the platform was designed to rotate so that shots from any angle could be filmed.

In preparing the space jockey for filming, Giger first applied a sepia glaze, then liquid latex, peeling some of it after it dried to give the impression of porous, decayed, transparent skin. With minute cosmetic touches continuing into the night, the space jockey was ready for shooting with no time to spare.

A large camera crane was used to achieve some of the scene’s most effective angles.

The original concept for the alien hatchery was the pyramid in the original Dan O'Bannon script, as depicted in early paintings by Ron Cobb and Chris Foss.

After Giger was brought onto the project, he designed his own version of the hatchery entitled the "egg silo." Due to budgetary restrictions and efforts to tighten the storyline, this concept was eliminated and the egg chamber became a part of the derelict.

The hieroglyphics from the original screenplay were still intended for production when Giger began his work. The artist rendered a beautifully detailed painting of the hieroglyphics, representing the Alien's life cycle, which were unfortunately never used.

Giger's reworked version of the egg chamber incorporates the same wall that was to be constructed for the space jockey set.

In the finished film, a matte painting was employed for the long shot to create the scale of the room. Kane's descent into the room was photographed with a stunt man standing in for John Hurt, and matte artist RAY CAPLE, working from Giger's design, completed the shot as a painting on glass, resulting in a composite image of the entire room.

Scott's original storyboards called for Kane to pass through a thin membrane before entering the egg chamber, activating some sort of biological alarm that would "alert the eggs." With no time to design this concept, it was replaced by the blue light seen covering the eggs.

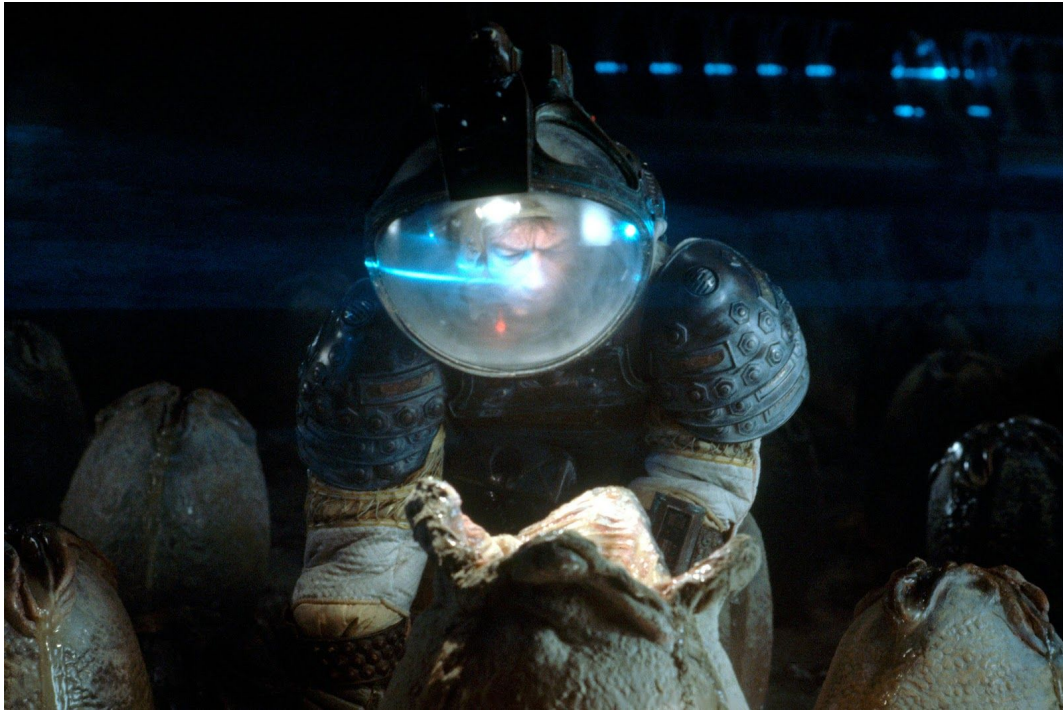
This was achieved through the use of a pulsating scanning laser. The production borrowed it from the rock group The Who. It was aimed directly over the eggs, creating a flat layer of light just above them. Since it wasn't visible unless it was hitting something, smoke was added to make the beam appear on film. The scanning laser and the completed egg chamber set were ready for filming on September 9, 1978.

Chapter 13

THE EGG

The leathery eggs from which the alien creature hatched were designed and built by Giger. The original painting he had done for Dan O'Bannon was modified only slightly. The eggs were built at a height of 2-½ feet. Giger began by building a mold from which a plaster egg was formed. Originally, Giger's design for the slit in the top of the egg was different. Upon seeing it, the producers and Ridley Scott felt that it was too sexually suggestive. Fearing protests, it was changed to a four-way, flower petal-like opening.

One hundred and thirty eggs were made for the egg chamber set, plus one that was designed to open. For this egg, the top was molded in rubber, and then attached to the



Alien Egg

plaster egg after Nick Alder installed a hydraulic mechanism.

Giger also designed the “carpet” underneath the eggs, which represents groups of intertwined worms. This was molded in plaster sections, then fitted into the floor of the egg chamber set.

Nick Alder’s crew operated the hydraulics to open the egg, while a lighting effect was used to

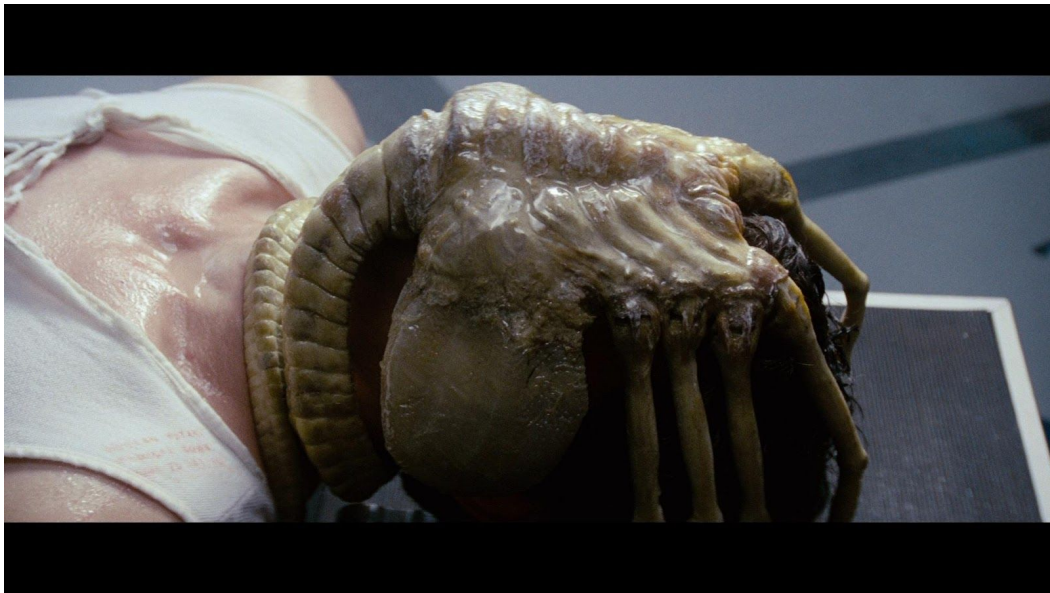
illuminate the egg when Kane shines his
flashlight on it.

Chapter 14

THE FACEHUGGER

The parasite that hatched from the egg and attaches itself to Kane is called the “facehugger,” named after its function. The life cycle of the alien calls for the facehugger to attach itself to a victim’s face, forcing a long tube-like appendage into his mouth and down into his esophagus. The victim, or host organism, is paralyzed and put into a coma and then kept alive while the creature deposits and nurtures the alien embryo in its host’s chest or lungs. It’s long tail wraps around the neck, using it to suffocate the victim at any attempt to remove the organism.

Like the creature's later forms, the facehugger was originally designed by H.R. Giger. When initially contacted by O'Bannon,



Alien Facehugger

Giger designed a parasite based on the writer's description of an octopus-like creature. Giger endowed his concept with a large, spring-like tail, so that it would appear able to leap forcefully out of the egg. This original concept

was deemed too large by Scott and the producers.

When it came time to finalize the design for the facehugger, Giger was absorbed in the task of constructing the adult alien. The job of actually building the two smaller forms was given to Roger Dicken, a talented sculpture artist highly regarded for his realistic creature work.

The facehugger concept was remarkably similar to what Scott and Dicken were designing, but Giger liked theirs better. Ron Cobb was then brought in to determine the type of skeletal structure it would need. Finally, this collaborative effort yielded the facehugger design as it appears in the film.

The first brief appearance of the facehugger as it launches from the egg onto Kane's face was done after all other scenes with the

creature. The fleeting images that make up the shocking attack brilliantly combine footage shot on the egg chamber set and physical effects footage done at Bray Studios.

To make the facehugger itself, Roger Dicken first sculpted the central part of the creature in plasticine, and then made a plaster cast and a rubber mold from it.

A metal skeleton was made for the face hugger, with eight extensions for the fingers. The fingers were made separately, each from the same mold, covered with latex and endowed with aluminum joints so that they would bend like real fingers. The tail was a flexible cord covered with foam and latex.

When Ash and DALLAS cut Kane's helmet off, the face hugger is revealed in detail for the first time. Its tail tightens around Kane's neck

and its rhythmic breathing is clearly seen and heard. The respiration was achieved through air pumps installed within the model. The tail, which tightens further when Ash attempts to remove one of the fingers, was covered with vaseline for smooth movement, and then articulated simply by pulling on a piano wire attached to its tip.

One of the most unexpected properties of the face hugger is revealed when Ash tries to make an incision on one of the fingers. To his surprise, the creature's blood is a highly concentrated acid that threatens to eat through the hull of the ship. This was one of Ron Cobb's suggestions, and it proved to serve two purposes: to increase the alien's invulnerability and to create a plausible reason why it could not be killed by a conventional weapon.

Creating an actual acid-like substance posed an interesting problem for the filmmakers, but Brian Johnson finally came up with what was used in the film. A fairly corrosive chemical mixture was created consisting mainly of chloroform, acetone, cyclohexylamine and acetic acid. Meanwhile, Roger Dicken had designed a special face hugger with a finger joint that could be unclipped. Six replacement fingers with tubing inside were made for the shot of the laser cutting into the finger, exposing the acid. For the next shot, a section of deck was made out of styrofoam and painted silver. When the substance was applied, it ate through the styrofoam rapidly. For the brief shots that appear in the film, the solution was effective.

The Nostromo crew soon discovers the face hugger has fallen off Kane's face and is

apparently dead. Examining it, Ash, Dallas, and Ripley are treated to a bizarre array of organs that make up the face hugger's underside. For these startling shots, Roger Dicken's final face hugger was used, consisting of a hollow rubber casing of the creature in which an assortment of pig's innards, clams, oysters, mussels, and squid were arranged until they appeared appropriately bizarre.

Chapter 15

THE CHEST BURSTER

Seen only briefly, the second alien form, the chest burster, is the star of the film's most notorious scene. The ship is en route to Earth and Kane awakens soon after the face hugger's death, apparently recovered. While happily enjoying a meal in the ship's mess hungrily, he starts heaving and choking, collapsing onto the table in agony. Suddenly, there seems to be an explosion within his chest, and in a shower of blood, a hideous creature violently bursts

through his body, looks briefly around, and quickly disappears into the darkness.

The chest burster scene is ALIEN's most talked about, most copied visual sequence. Its unexpectedness and realistic portrayal contributed to the notoriety it has achieved. The creature, which can essentially be considered an alien baby, was originally designed by Giger, but his concept was considered inappropriate for its resemblance to a plucked turkey.

Roger Dicken was given Giger's design and, despite his objections to it, was asked to build it as Giger had painted it. Dicken constructed a hand puppet sculpted in plasticine, cast in foam plastic with a latex rubber skin. Dicken showed Ridley Scott and the producers the finished puppet, and it was then that the decision was made to completely change the concept.

Based on Giger's design of the adult Alien, Roger Dicken altered the chest burster to effectively represent an infant that would conceivably grow into the adult monster. In appearance it was little more than a mini-version of the Alien head attached to a long tail. He constructed a preliminary model out of plasticine with an interior framework of aluminum. This model originally had small legs which were eventually removed at Ridley Scott's suggestion.

The scale of the final design necessitated a creature too small for a hand puppet. Dicken's solution was to design a curved metal rod that ran down to a hand grip. A steel spring in the creature's "neck" with a wire attached enabled it to bend over, while air tubes would give it the ability to open its jaw. Dicken then built three separate chest bursters for the scene.

The chest burster was the first alien form to be filmed. The day before, all shots leading up to the creature's appearance were completed, consisting of the crew eating dinner and Kane's convulsions.

The next day, no actors except for John Hurt were allowed on the set. The table in the mess had a large hole cut into it which the actor would be fitted with just his head, shoulders, and arms above the table. Before John Hurt climbed into position, Roger Deaken tested the mechanism used for the first shots. A fiberglass chest piece that ended at the waist was attached to Hurt's shoulders, and then fitted with a T-Shirt, which gave the appearance that he was lying on the table. The artificial chest had a large hole cut into it which was then filled with offal, while several tubes ran inside the chest through which

fake blood made from raspberry juice would squirt.

The initial burst of the creature was filmed first, and for these shots Roger Dicken used a plaster chest burster that had no tail and only simple articulation of its mouth. Nick Alder designed a mechanism that used compressed air to provide enough force to burst the creature through the artificial chest. Alder, Dicken and three other effects people clad in waterproof clothing were crowded beneath the table holding John Hurt and operating the compressor and the blood pumps.

At noon, the rest of the cast arrived on the set to find the upper half of John Hurt lying on the table smoking a cigarette, the director and crew dressed in white smocks, and three cameras covered with plastic. Up until this point,

the script had been their only knowledge of what was about to take place. After hours of preparation, the scene was ready for filming.

John Hurt again worked up the agony which had been filmed the previous day, while Dicken and Alder set their elaborate construction into motion. The blood squirted through the plastic tubes on cue, and the chest burster came up through the hole in the chest, but it couldn't rip through the T-shirt on the first take. Effective reaction shots were recorded, however. In order to re-shoot the scene, the entire set had to be cleaned of blood, the fake chest had to be fitted with another T-shirt, and the actors had to change into clean costumes. It was ninety minutes before a second take could be done. This time, the effects team applied diluted battery acid to the T-shirt to weaken the fibers

and made small razor slits in it to make sure the creature would come through.

In all, four takes of this sequence were done. In one of them, Veronica Cartwright was positioned in such a way that one of the plastic tubes squirted two pints of raspberry juice directly in her face, knocking her backwards and onto the floor. A glimpse of this take was used in the completed film.

After the actual “chest bursting” was satisfactorily filmed, the cameras moved in for close-ups of Dicken’s second chest burster model, this one fully articulated. In these shots the hideous creature turns to look at its victim and then hisses at the others. The creature’s gills, inflating chest, and chromium dentures are visible in these shots. The sound editors used a

combination of a viper, a pig's squeal, and a baby's cry for the chest burster's shriek.

The last part of the chest burster scene entailed the creature's exit, in which it violently streaks across the table and out of sight within seconds. Roger Dicken's third model was used for these takes, this one with a long, fully articulated tail. The mess table was split in half, with a trolley running down the middle to glide the creature rapidly across the table while Dicken operated the tail. Three takes of this shot were filmed, putting the final touch on an extremely successful dramatic sequence. When the demanding scene was finally completed, John Hurt extricated himself from the table.

Chapter 16

THE ALIEN

The title character of ALIEN is the real star of the film and the main reason for its unanimous popularity and critical acclaim. The final creation is the result of the efforts of many talented artists and technicians. Surprisingly, the creature seen in the film is remarkably close to Giger's "Necronom IV" painting, which first inspired Ridley Scott.

Before committing irrevocably to the concept, Giger and Scott explored other possibilities. They both agreed that the Alien should not at any time appear to be a man in a costume. First they considered doing a creature with a completely inhuman form, but there was neither the time nor the money to design and



Alien Adult

build a totally mechanized creature. Scott then considered using contortionists to create an odd shape out of several intertwined human forms but it would have been too awkward to build a costume for it. Finally Scott relinquished the idea of using one man in an Alien suit. His plan was to make the creature very elegant, tall, slim, and graceful and to shoot it in positions that would not suggest a human stature.

Still going with the “Necronom IV” concept, Giger began to elaborate. He liked the elongated head but wanted to give it a purpose, so he endowed the monster with a long biomechanical tongue that could extend outward from the mouth. As an additional menace, the tongue would be equipped with its own set of lethal teeth.

The early designs for the monster retained the large bulbous eyes from the “Necronom IV” painting, but soon it was decided that a creature without eyes, driven totally by flawless instinct, would be more terrifying. Other small changes at this stage included a darkening of the skin tone and, at Dan O’Bannon’s suggestion, the inclusion of the six-fingered hands.

Satisfied with the appearance of the creature, the next step was to find an actor with the appropriate physique. The role was eventually given to BOLAJI BADEJO, a Nigerian graphic arts student living in London. Badejo, twenty-six years old at the time, was six feet ten inches in height with long slender legs and an extremely slim build, all of which would serve to endow the Alien with the stature and the grace of movement that Ridley Scott wanted.

A full-sized body mold of Badejo was cast in plaster from which a life-size mannequin was made.

The mannequin was sent to Roger Dicken, who at the time was still delegated the responsibility of constructing the costume. Using clay, Dicken began building muscle and tissue directly onto the mannequin. Shortly after he began this work, Giger arrived from Switzerland. Seeing the costume in progress, he was dissatisfied with some of Dicken's variations on the original designs. Giger realized that he was the only person that could correctly interpret his own designs in three dimensions, so despite his intention of returning to Zurich right away, he agreed to remain in London and build the suit himself, allowing Dicken to concentrate on the face hugger and chest burster. Giger set up a

workshop for himself in a small partitioned area on Stage B at Shepperton.

Giger began work on the Alien costume by using plasticine, bones, tubes, and various mechanical pieces to mold over the statue of Bolaji. He molded the head onto a real human skull using plasticine and flexible piping.

Once the molds were completed, Gordon Carroll contacted Carlo Rambaldi in California, who fortunately had time between projects to work on the Alien head.

In 1947, Rambaldi graduated from the Vincenzo Monti Technical Institute and in 1951 he received a degree in motion picture art direction at the Academy of Fine Arts in Bologna. After working for many years in the Italian film industry, he came to the US for KING KONG (1976) and eventually decided to remain.

His unique talent for bringing life to non-existent creatures made him a prime choice for the Alien head effects.

Rambaldi received one of Giger's head molds and copies of his conceptual art including the "Necronom IV" painting. Using these, he determined the mechanical moves needed for the Alien head. All together, he concurred that it would need seven distinct movements, so he proposed a series of mechanical joints and muscles which would be activated by cables.

Rambaldi designed the Alien head with the following capabilities of movement:

- 1.Face moves vertically
- 2.Face moves horizontally
- 3.Lips curl back

4. Mouth opens and closes
5. Tongue moves in and out
6. Teeth open and close
7. Jugular movement at the throat

Rambaldi prepared a series of sketches and drawings and also built a clay model of the head, which he videotaped from all angles. All of this was then forwarded to London. Soon after, he was advised to proceed with the head mechanics. He was sent a fiberglass cast of Badejo's head to determine the spatial restrictions of the mask and to arrange the inner mechanisms. In order to keep the head as lightweight as possible, Rambaldi used fiberglass for the skull and moving parts, and aluminum for the interior support. He built the tongue out of fiberglass on geared metal tracks.

When completed it could extend outward about ten inches, either slow or fast. Nine cables inside the head ran out the back of the neck and foam latex skin covered the skull.

On August 21, 1978, Rambaldi arrived at Shepperton with three Alien heads. Two were fully articulated with three Alien heads according to his design, one primary and one back-up, and the third was a lightweight head with no mechanics except for the lips. For long shots where no articulation was necessary, three additional heads were made in London including one soft rubber head for stunt shots.

Slight changes were made to the head at this time. Chrome teeth were installed into the mouth and tongue, and transparent rubber was used for the lips so that the teeth would always be visible. Also, prophylactics were used for the

tendons between the upper and lower jaw. Finally, a smooth vacuum-formed plastic shell was fitted on the top of the head, which could appear reflective or transparent depending on the lighting.

Giger painted all the heads in blacks and browns while overseeing the construction of the rest of the costume, which was now under the coordination of sculptor EDDIE BUTLER.

The first Alien costume to be completed was too rigid, seriously restricting the actor's movements. The solution was to divide the costume into separate pieces which would be mounted individually over a one-piece black bodysuit. The legs were pulled onto Bolaji like a pair of pants, with zippers on the sides.

The torso section of the costume slid over Bolaji's head like a sweater. The arms were

pulled up like sleeves. The rubber feet went on like shoes and the hands went on like gloves.

The Alien's tail was built by DAVID WATLING and was attached and controlled separately. It consisted of a seven foot vertebrate construction that was firmly anchored inside the suit. In addition to the tail, Watling had also built an Alien head with radio controlled movements as a back-up in case Rambaldi's head was not completed in time.

Once the suit was finished, duplicates were made to accommodate clean-up and repair necessities. One smaller suit was made for stuntman Eddie Powell, who was to perform in certain shots. All the suits were airbrushed by Giger.

Carlo Rambaldi left London after two weeks, assigning his associate CARLO DEMARCHIS to

supervise the operation and maintenance of the Rambaldi heads. Nearly all the shots with the Alien utilize Rambaldi's mechanisms. Up to six operators were needed to control the head movements for some of the more complicated shots.

With the suits and crew ready, the Alien appeared on the set for the first time on September 6, 1978.

The first scene to be photographed corresponded to the creature's first appearance in the film. While searching for the cat on C Level, Brett wanders into a large chamber housing one of the huge landing legs. While trying to coax "Jones" from his hiding place, a blur of something huge moves behind him. The unsuspecting engineer turns around and is confronted by the full grown Alien monster, its

lips parting to reveal its hideous, drooling teeth. A second later, it is over, as the Alien violently attacks Brett, ascending with him back into its hiding place within the landing gear.

Despite its brevity, this scene was very difficult to film. Ridley Scott wanted the Alien to descend upside-down from above, in defiance of gravity, and to achieve this, Bolaji Badejo was mounted in a harness attached to a large boom arm and hoisted up into the landing leg. The tail was controlled by a series of overhead wires. Harry Dean Stanton also had to be fitted into a harness so that he too could be elevated over the ground. After several hours of unsatisfactory attempts, Bolaji Badejo could no longer remain in the costume in an upside-down position.

Scott next tried the shots with an empty suit, but it was obvious that someone was needed to

articulate the creature. Stuntman Eddie Powell then donned his costume and performed the stunt.

Powell picked up another stuntman who was doubling for Stanton. In the end, Scott resorted to a series of quick cuts that suggest the action in the scene. On the day the scene was shot, Scott conceived the idea of having the Alien crush Brett's head. Even though an insert was used in the final film, the effects team put a series of blood tubes beneath Harry Dean Stanton's cap for the filming.

Another of Scott's last-minute ideas was the dripping water in the landing gear room. Sprinklers were mounted overhead and Scott dressed appropriately to keep dry.

Scott originally wanted to see the Alien moving around the corridors of the ship, but

photographic tests proved unconvincing, so Scott continued to show the Alien obliquely throughout the film. Its appearance in the air shaft where Dallas confronts it was changed from Scott's original intentions for the scene. Unable to show the creature stalking slowly towards Dallas due to the tightness of the vent, Scott elected to go for a sudden shock. Bolaji Badejo was replaced by a stunt person during the creature's brief appearance in the scene.

For the Alien's attack on Lambert, the scene originally called for the Alien to appear squatting on the floor near the doorway. After being spotted by Lambert, it rises for the attack.

In unused takes, the Alien is clearly shown as it attacks Lambert. These shots violated Scott's desire to disguise the human configuration of the Alien, so for the edited version of the scene,

Scott and film editor TERRY RAWLINGS wisely chose to concentrate on Lambert's reactions and the most threatening shots of the creature. Veronica Cartwright's remarkable portrayal of fear gave the scene its true source of terror.

For Parker's death, a fiberglass cast of Yaphet Kotto's head was made, with a wax forehead that the Alien's teeth could penetrate. Inside the forehead were pigs' brains. The Alien tongue was mounted by itself for the close-up shot. Barbed hooks were fastened to the end of the teeth so it would break the wax surface of the forehead.

After Ripley sets the Nostromo for self-destruction, she heads for the shuttle. Peering around a corner, she is startled by the Alien blocking her way, forcing her to attempt to abort the countdown. As originally shot, Ripley

was able to get a long look at the Alien crouching in the corridor before it rose up and forced her retreat.

For the ending scene in which the Alien hides in a maze of machinery aboard the shuttle Narcissus, the set was literally constructed around Bolaji Badejo. Extricating himself from the machinery proved difficult. The suit tore several times and at one point the tail came off.

The Alien's fall from the hatch was achieved by mounting the stuntman on a boom arm that would pull him rapidly away from the shuttle's hatch.

To achieve the shots of the Alien hanging on the tether outside the Narcissus, a forced perspective mock-up of the rear of the shuttle was built on a stage at Shepperton and mounted above the floor with the camera directly beneath

it so that the stuntman could literally be dropped from the shuttle.

To create the bright exhaust that blasts the creature away, water jets were used with high intensity backlighting. The resulting shots are very effective. Together with the final shots of Ripley making her final report on the destruction of the Nostromo and her hypersleep chamber where she is returned to suspended animation, production was brought to an end.

In December of 1978, principal photography on ALIEN was completed. A few days later, all of the sets were completely gone and the stages were ready for the next production. After that day, ALIEN existed only as a series of images on thousands of feet of film.

PART III: POST-PRODUCTION

Chapter 17

EDITING AND MUSIC

At the beginning of the post-production period, Ridley Scott shifted his office over to Bray Studios to set up the ALIEN editing facility. At Bray, the special effects work was still in progress, so Scott was also able to monitor their progress throughout the editing period. Due to his involvement, many of the effects were

re-done, keeping Brian Johnson's unit in operation until February of 1979.

The film editor's job is different from all others in motion picture production because his or her work is successful only when it is not noticeable. The editor must disguise the illusion and make it reality, taking into account camera angle and movement, duration of each shot, time of day, continuity of action, the actor's performance, and many other factors. While working with the editor, the director must essentially perform his job all over again.

Scott and film editor Terry Rawlings worked together on cutting ALIEN into a finished movie. Rawlings also edited Ridley's Scott's film LEGEND (1985) as well as ALIEN 3. On editing the first film, he and Ridley Scott immediately realized that views of the creature that lasted too

long robbed it of much of its mystery and terror. Scott also insisted on disguising its human configuration as much as possible, so he decided to employ the “less is more” school of film editing. Citing the original Steven Spielberg JAWS (1975) as a previous example, Scott again proved with ALIEN that the most convincing movie monsters are the ones that appear on screen the least. With this in mind, Scott and Rawlings began essentially cutting the title character out of the picture.

In addition to trimming scenes with the Alien, several scenes that had been shot during production were eliminated from the film during the editing process. After two successful sneak previews of the fine cut, additional deletions were made. The decision to eliminate scenes before release is a process that affects every

film. For ALIEN, Scott and Rawlings made several editing decisions that influenced the overall tone and rhythm of the picture.

As originally shot, ALIEN had the potential of being much more graphic and explicit in every way. Most of this footage was eliminated in favor of a more subtle approach to the characterization and plot than originally intended. Scenes in which characters argued and openly insulted one another were dropped, replacing cold brutality with an atmosphere of uncertainty and suspicion that heightened the tension and drama. Graphic violence during the Alien's attacks was toned down to create an impressionistic sensation of the creature and overt sexual references were dropped, leaving only psychological undertone of sexuality.

H.R. Giger often endows his work with a sexual suggestiveness, and *ALIEN* this is evident in all of his creations, especially in the derelict entrance portal, the opening of the egg, the shape of the adult Alien's head, and the biological function of the face hugger, which Ash seemingly tries to emulate by forcing a rolled magazine down Ripley's throat. All of these are presented unobtrusively, and even though they can be overlooked, the imagery psychologically suggests the profanity of the creature in an identifiable manner.

Other than Giger's creations and a quick shot of pornographic photos on the wall of the mess, the final version of the film is virtually devoid of any straightforward sexual references until Ripley undresses on board the shuttle. There, the tough warrant officer is literally

stripped away and a vulnerable human female is revealed. The final confrontation then becomes a battle between two uniquely sexual beings, one driven by instinct and the other by determination.

While this is an effective allegory, the filmmakers had actually begun the project with the intention of creating a film with sexual references throughout. Even though the unfilmed romantic interlude between Ripley and Dallas on board the shuttle was eliminated from the script before production began, other sexual references did make it before the cameras only to be deleted before the final cut was completed.

In addition to scenes containing violence and sexual references, some scenes were eliminated simply for the purpose of tightening the action and developing the film's pace.

The recovery of these sequences has become an important part of the film's history. Since no early color workprints of the film could be located, Ridley Scott expressed his support in retrieving the original camera negative from the warehouse facility in the UK where it had been stored since completion of filming. Terry Rawlings provided his continuity script so that the desired takes could be easily identified. The original audio recordings were also acquired and synchronized with the picture as if they were dailies coming in from a new film. The scenes were then edited on video for exclusive presentation in the ALIEN Laserdisc Collector's Section.

These scenes are not only of interest to fans of the film, but to anyone interested in seeing the editing process at work. Some of these scenes

and footage would be later restored and used for the ALIEN Director's Cut supervised by Ridley Scott himself.

THE UNKNOWN ALIEN TRANSMISSION

This scene occurs right after Dallas briefs his crew on the unknown alien transmission. Before approaching the planet, Lambert plots the course, gets a reading on the planet, and receives the alien signal. This was dropped in favor of moving the action to the planet as quickly as possible.

In an effort to develop a unique sound effect for the alien transmission, the producers contacted Ben Burtt, who had won an Academy Award (Best Sound - 1977) for his revolutionary work on STAR WARS (and who has since

continued to provide state of the art sound design for George Lucas' productions). Burt developed several different effects for the transmission, as well as contributing his expertise to other sequences where the sound design demanded special attention. Burt's own favored alien transmission was included on the Laserdisc but unfortunately was not used in the ALIEN Director's Cut. A much more subtle audio effect was chosen.

LAMBERT CONFRONTS RIPLEY

In this scene, which takes place as Dallas and Ash first examine the face hugger, Lambert confronts Ripley for refusing to admit the search party back aboard the ship. This heated scene was dropped, leaving an undertone of tension

between the two women that remains unspecified in the final version.

KANE'S CONDITION

After the danger involving the acid has passed, the crew returns to the Autodoc for further discussion. While providing a hint at Kane's forthcoming fate, it was eliminated as being an extraneous conversation.

RIPLEY AND PARKER

As Parker and Brett make repairs to the ship, Ripley calls down to check on their progress. This scene further vocalizes the tension between Ripley and Parker.

PLANNING THE SEARCH

After the surprise appearance of the chest burster, the crew convenes in the now cleaned-up mess to discuss their next course of action. This conversation was also deemed extraneous in favor of going directly to Kane's funeral, followed by the beginning of the search.

A QUICK GLIMPSE

For Brett's death, the film substitutes a quick insert in lieu of the dripping blood that was originally shot. Also, the scene originally ran longer to show Parker and Ripley running into the landing leg chamber in time to glimpse the Alien escaping into the air vent.

RIPLEY REASSURES LAMBERT

After Dallas' death, Ripley has this short exchange with Lambert. This scene existed in the script in several variations, but as filmed, it serves as an uneasy reconciliation for the earlier conflict between the two women as well as indicating Ripley's suspicions about Ash and a casual attitude towards sex.

THE AIRLOCK SEQUENCE

Immediately following the conversation between Ripley and Lambert, the script called for an elaborate action sequence in which Ripley spots the Alien outside the main airlock door. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the only portion of the scene that was filmed shows Ripley and

Lambert on the bridge responding to Parker's instructions. Even without the unfilmed portions, the scene remains effective.

The unfilmed portion of the scene would have shown Parker silently observing as the Alien enters the open airlock. Suddenly, an alarm claxon rings off, startling the creature out of the airlock. The door automatically closes, crushing part of the creature. Acid pours out, threatening the ship's pressurization. The Alien yanks free of the door and escapes into the air vent. Ripley arrives and sees the acid leak. Depressurization is seconds away.

The scene then returns to Lambert on the bridge.

Ash and Lambert arrive at the airlock and administer oxygen to Ripley and Parker. The chamber is repressurized and the area is

secured. Ripley accuses Ash of activating the alarm that startled the Alien out of the airlock.

THE COCOON SEQUENCE

This is ALIEN's most talked-about deleted sequence because it provides an otherwise undisclosed insight into the life cycle of the creature. After discovering the bodies of Parker and Lambert and realizing that she is alone, Ripley makes a startling discovery. The cocoon sequence as filmed was virtually identical to its counterpart in the original Dan O'Bannon screenplay. To create the scene as it was filmed, Giger and sculptor Peter Boysey worked from Ridley Scott's rough sketches.

To make the Brett cocoon, Peter Boysey used a human skull and molded the shape of a

body out of rubber latex. Then he built up the secreted growth covering it.

Since the concept for the sequence was that Brett was being transformed into an egg containing a new face hugger, with Dallas as the intended host, one of Giger's finished eggs was used to complete the construction as filmed.

THE MUSIC

The musical score for ALIEN by Jerry Goldsmith plays a large part in the overall effectiveness of the film. A veteran composer of over 100 film and television scores, Goldsmith received an Academy Award (Best Original Score - 1976) for his darkly satanic score for THE OMEN (1976) as well as numerous nominations for several other scores. When he

composed the music for ALIEN, he was in the midst of one of the most prolific periods in his career. In the eighteen months prior to the premiere of ALIEN, eight films with Goldsmith scores were released, many of them science-fiction or horror films. Among these scores are ISLANDS IN THE STREAM (1977), CAPRICORN ONE (1978), DAMIEN: OMEN II (1978), THE BOYS FROM BRAZIL (1978), MAGIC (1978), COMA (1978), THE SWARM (1978), and THE GREAT TRAIN ROBBERY (1978). All of these were large-scale compositions as was his score for STAR TREK: THE MOTION PICTURE (1979), which he composed immediately upon the completion of ALIEN.

Throughout his career, Goldsmith has provided a wide range of musical compositions

for many different genres of films from small dramas to sprawling epics to horror and science-fiction films like ALIEN. Born in 1929, Goldsmith began his composing career with his famous television scores for THE TWILIGHT ZONE (1959-1964). His first feature score was for BLACK PATCH (1957). Some of his more noteworthy scores include A PATCH OF BLUE (1965), THE BLUE MAX (1966), THE SAND PEBBLES (1966), PLANET OF THE APES (1968), PATTON (1970), TORA TORA TORA (1970), LOGAN'S RUN (1976), RAGGEDY MAN (1981), THE FINAL CONFLICT (1981), OUTLAND (1981), FIRST BLOOD (1982) and its two sequels, POLTERGEIST (1982) and POLTERGEIST II: THE OTHER SIDE (1986), TWILIGHT ZONE: THE MOVIE (1983), GREMLINS (1984), SUPERGIRL (1984),

EXPLORERS (1985), INNERSPACE (1987), LIONHEART (1987), and ALIEN NATION (1988). Goldsmith collaborated with Ridley Scott again for the film LEGEND (1985), although his score was used only for the European version of the film.

For the ALIEN score, some of Goldsmith's original compositions were taken out of the film and replaced with alternate music cues, which included the composer's effectively dark and mysterious cue that plays over the main title and throughout the exploration of the planet and derelict. In addition, several sequences were replaced with cues from Goldsmith's score for FREUD (1962), including the air duct sequence and the acid sequence, while the finale and end title were replaced by an excerpt from the first

movement of Howard Hanson's Symphony #2 (The Romantic).

The original soundtrack recording, conducted by Lionel Newman, has been available since the original release and preserves Goldsmith's original score for the film before the alterations and replacements were made. This includes the original main title, end title, acid test, and air duct sequence cues.

For the film's most suspenseful sequences, Goldsmith's Stravinsky-esque string arrangements are reminiscent of the classic film scores for THE THING (Dimitri Tiomkin, 1951), PSYCHO (Bernard Herrmann, 1960), and JAWS (John Williams, 1975). Often in the ALIEN score, strange instruments and percussion joined with atonal combinations of brass and strings to

create an insect-like sound that is almost biological.

Goldsmith captured the full spectrum of ALIEN through his music, as the listener hears the vast emptiness of space in one moment and grisly human terror in the next.

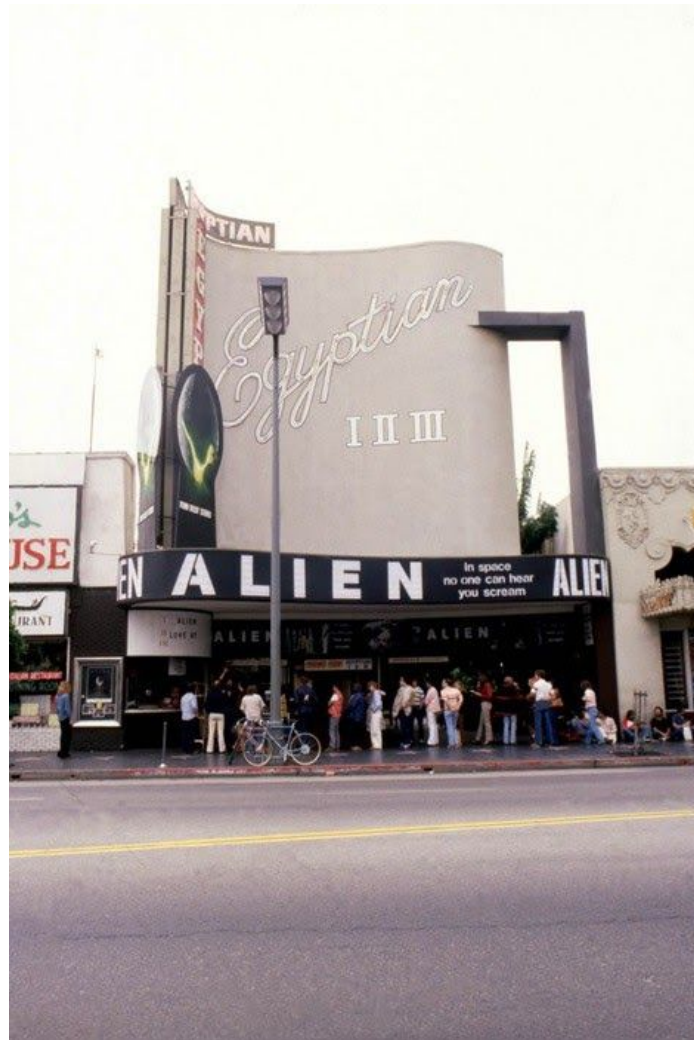
SOUND DESIGN

The sound plays an important role in the effectiveness of ALIEN. Any science fiction film usually requires an array of original sound effects to create an otherworldly environment, and ALIEN's sound design is particularly rich and still unsurpassed in its complexity and realism.

Chapter 18

THEATRICAL RELEASE

ALIEN premiered in the United States on Friday, May 25, 1979. Other major releases that summer were ROCKY II, ESCAPE FROM ALCATRAZ, THE JERK, MOONRAKER, CONCORDE: AIRPORT 1979, AND MEATBALLS. JAWS and STAR WARS were both reissued that summer as well. ALIEN grossed a total of \$40,300,000 in domestic theater rentals.





ALIEN was a widely-publicized film, but its familiar image of the luminescent egg effectively marketed the film without revealing any of its surprises. As with all films, many concepts were considered before finalizing an approach of selling the film to the public.

In the spring of 1980, ALIEN was honored with the Academy Award for Outstanding Achievement in Visual Effects. The year's formidable competitors in the category were STAR TREK: THE MOTION PICTURE (1979), Disney's THE BLACK HOLE (1979), and Steven Spielberg's 1941 (1979).

A L I E N



In space no one can hear you scream.

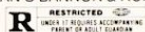


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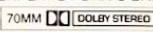
A L I E N

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JOHN HURT IAN HOLM & YAPHET KOTTO ^{AS PARKER}

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER RONALD SHUSETT PRODUCED BY GORDON CARROLL, DAVID GILER AND WALTER HILL DIRECTED BY RIDLEY SCOTT
STORY BY DAN O'BANNON & RONALD SHUSETT SCREENPLAY BY DAN O'BANNON MUSIC JERRY GOLDSMITH PANAVISION® EASTMAN KODAK COLOR®



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Chapter 19

PROMOTION

Indicative of the success and popularity of ALIEN is the merchandise and promotional items that became available soon after the film's release. Most notable among these are a series of quality books.

The ALIEN novelization by noted science-fiction author Alan Dean Foster was released as a movie tie-in by Warner Books. Originally available in both book-club and trade editions, the ALIEN novelization contains detailed characterizations and all of the scenes that were deleted from the film.

The Book of Alien was published by Heavy Metal Books. It documents the film's production

design with articles, photographs, and production art.

Also from Heavy Metal Books was *ALIEN-The Illustrated Story*. This was a high quality comic adaptation of the film in the unique Heavy Metal style.

Another book version of the film was *The Alien Movie Novel*, available from Avon Books. Shortly before home video enabled audiences to bring a film home after its theatrical engagements, the movie-novel or photo-novel had been a popular film-related item. Through frame blow-ups from the film itself and dialogue either typed beneath or placed in a comic-strip bubble, the movie-novel essentially provided a portable slide-show version of the film. Edited by Richard Anobile, *The Alien Movie Novel* was among the best of this type of book, reproducing

over 1000 frame blow-ups and all of the dialogue.

Giger's Alien is a deluxe, superior quality book that has become a collector's item for fans of the film and of the artist. Designed and published by Giger himself, the book documents Giger's contributions to ALIEN through excerpts from the artist's production diary. Currently available through Morpheus International, the book contains 140 photographs from Giger's personal collection, 34 high quality reproductions of Giger's paintings for the film, 33 sketches, and 5 new paintings rendered specifically for the book, including the front cover art.

Although ALIEN didn't have the merchandising potential of STAR WARS, Kenner Toys did manufacture several ALIEN

items including a fully poseable action figure of the adult Alien monster.

Halcyon, a British model kit company, released several new models for ALIEN in the spring of 1992, including the space jockey, the face hugger, the Alien, and the Narcisus.

All of these items enabled fans of the film to collect memories of a popular and highly acclaimed motion picture experience to be cherished for all time.

Chapter 20

HOME VIDEO

ALIEN has been released on home video numerous times in various formats as a solo release and as part of boxed sets along with the other franchise films. Each time the film was released on home video, it did exceptionally well, proving its popularity and profitability.

The first VHS release was in 1980 by MAGNETIC VIDEO CORPORATION. It was then released again in 1983 and 1984 by CBS FOX VIDEO.

Some of the other fine
videocassette programs available are:

The Sound of Music / M*A*S*H / Patton
The French Connection / The African Queen
A Touch of Class / The Graduate
Carnal Knowledge / Tora! Tora! Tora!
Hello, Dolly! / The King & I
The Sailor Who Fell From Grace With The Sea
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The Sand Pebbles / Valley of the Dolls
Heckle & Jeckle / C.C. & Company
Deputy Dawg / Rabbit Test
The Paper Chase / The Making of Star Wars
Doctor Dolittle / The Bible
Hercules / Girls, Girls, Girls
The Agony and the Ecstasy
The Day of the Dolphin / Soldier Blue
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the Sundance Kid / In Praise of Older Women
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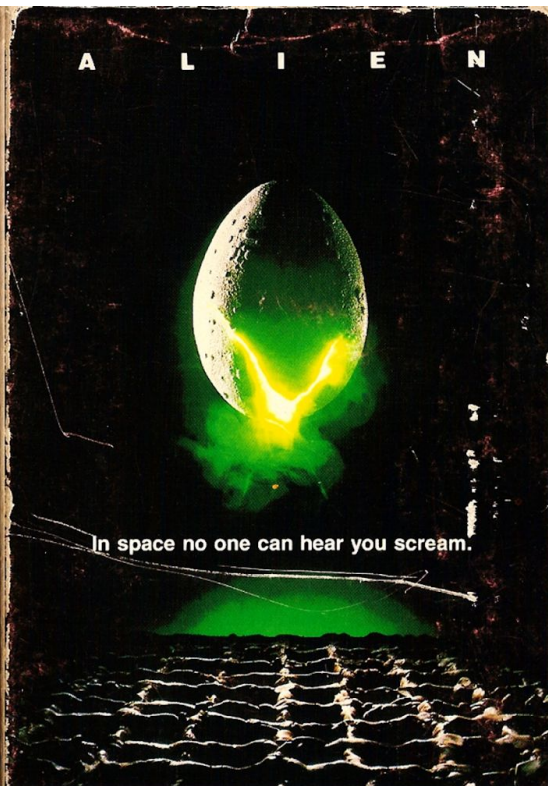


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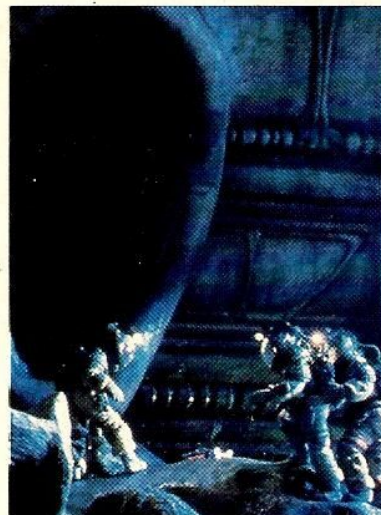
A L I E N



TOM SKERRITT SIGOURNEY WEAVER VERONICA CARTWRIGHT
HARRY DEAN STANTON JOHN HURT IAN HOLM and YAPHET KOTTO AS PARKER
EXECUTIVE PRODUCER RONALD SHUSETT PRODUCED BY GORDON CARROLL, DAVID GILER and WALTER HILL
DIRECTED BY RIDLEY SCOTT STORY BY DAN O'BANNON and RONALD SHUSETT
SCREENPLAY BY DAN O'BANNON MUSIC JERRY GOLDSMITH PANAVISION®
EASTMAN KODAK COLOR® PRINTS BY DELUXE®

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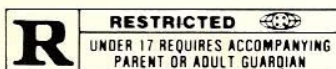


The ultimate in science fiction!

(Color, 1979) In deep outer space the crew of a commercial spaceship make an unscheduled landing on a barren and desolate planet for engine repairs. They encounter a pulsating organism which attaches itself to one of the crew members and reproduces within his

body to become the deadly ALIEN. As each of the crew members is slain by the creature—one by one—the final confrontation between the last surviving crew member and the Alien culminates in an explosive conclusion.

116 Minutes



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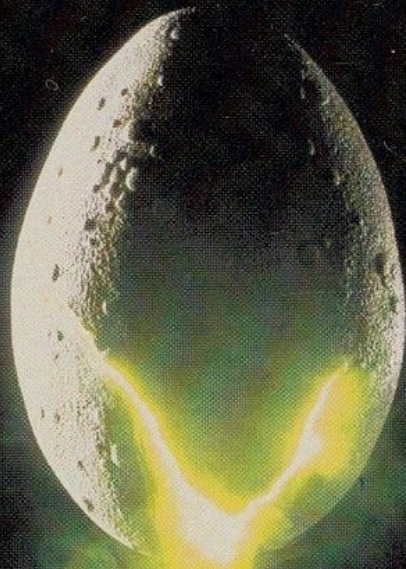
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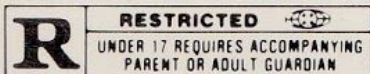


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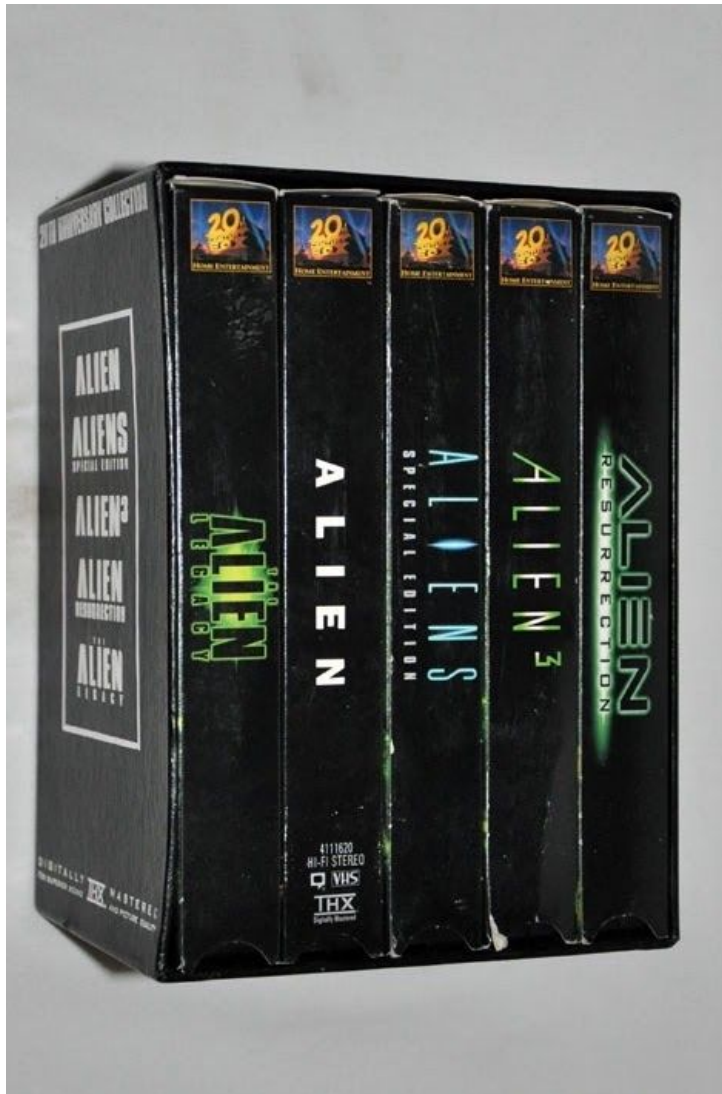


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ALIEN was also released on LaserDisc twice. The first was in 1981. The second time was in 1992 and was part of a 3-Disc set titled ALIEN: SPECIAL COLLECTOR'S EDITION.

On June 1, 1999, ALIEN was released for the first time on DVD titled ALIEN: 20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION. On that same day, ALIEN was released as part of the ALIEN LEGACY box set on both VHS and DVD. This set included the first video documentary on the making of ALIEN titled THE ALIEN LEGACY (1999, 68 min)



On December 3, 2003, the ALIEN QUADRILOGY box set was released on DVD. At the time, this set was the pinnacle of ALIEN home video releases. It featured all four of the original franchise films in their original theatrical versions paired with alternative versions

including the ALIEN DIRECTOR'S CUT and numerous documentaries and special features.

As great as this release was, ALIEN received the ultimate upgrade and deluxe release with the ALIEN ANTHOLOGY Blu-ray box set released on October 25, 2010. To date, this is the most comprehensive home video release of ALIEN and all the other original franchise films.



Over the years there have also been numerous making of documentaries for both television and home video. Below is a list of the documentaries along with the years of release and the runtimes. All of these documentaries are included in the ALIEN ANTHOLOGY Blu-ray box set.

THE ALIEN LEGACY (1999, 68 min)

ALIEN EVOLUTION (2001, 50 min)

THE ALIEN SAGA (2002, 109 min)

ALIEN EVOLUTION: ALIEN RE-EDIT (2003, 64 min)

THE BEAST WITHIN: MAKING ALIEN (2003,
178 min)

Chapter 21

CLOSING COMMENTARY

ALIEN was critically acclaimed and immensely popular. At the peak of a cinematic revival of science fiction and horror, the film struck several sensitive nerves with its audience. The reasons for its success cannot be attributed to any repeatable formula, but to the combined talents of many unique artists and filmmakers. As a result, the film has endured despite many imitations made in its wake.

ALIEN is an indisputable classic, a film whose popularity is based not on hardware and special effects, but on the honesty and realism of its portrayal. It is a film about the unknown horrors of the universe and how human beings deal with them. It is the perfect, classic struggle

between good and evil, between biology and technology, a battle between everything human and everything inhuman. For this reason, the film will always remain as enjoyable and effective as it was in the summer of 1979.

Dan O'Bannon, H.R. Giger, Ron Cobb, and all of the other talented individuals came together for the creation of this timeless masterpiece. At the head of the table is Ridley Scott, whose guiding hand and unique vision put the film on the screen for everyone to see and enjoy for all time.